*"Where there is no vision the people perish."*

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## SHAKESPEARE'S CLAIMS

*To be Spoken with an Appeal for Funds for the Rebuilding of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon*

DEAR Sir, or Madam: Up in Stratford town
A little, famous theatre is burnt down.
A little place, but not of little fame,
Where nigh on fifty years the players came
To honour him of whom our blood has learnt
One half its English pride. That place is burnt.

No more it stands by Avon's meadows green,
No more on April evenings will be seen
Taking its mimic world that living throng
Of men and women that are Shakespeare's song.
They have no home. They wander up and down,
Ghosts, without any home, in Stratford town—
Who should be housed each as a queen or king
For ever by his dust, who knew to sing,
Upon their lips, the lesson and delight
Of earth, till fall of unattempted night.
A citizen, whose name is Stratford's yet,
Gave them a home, where from the world have met,
These fifty years, bright companies upon
A pilgrimage of beauty. It is gone.
And now what once one gave, we are bidden all
To give, lest in his England we should fall
Something from honour, something from our own.
Quarrels we have, but here no word is known
Among us of dispute; 'tis ours to give
The life he gave us means whereby to live.

And should the friends of Shakespeare's England take
Our pleasure as their own for Shakespeare's sake,
They do but share a province of the mind
An English yeoman charted for mankind.

Dear Sir, or Madam, Who should dare to claim
Good-will or charity in Shakespeare's name?
Not we nor any in the commonweal
May speak so high. Our crusade has the seal

Of majesty, the majesty that knew
Homage from him, our poet, such as few
Or none of princes chronicled have heard;

It has our Dorset master's kindling word;
It has consent of policies; and now
To tell, as we shall tell, the story how
When Shakespeare called his countrymen to share
The cost of revelation, they were there.
The playhouse is burnt down; then here we cry
"Long live the playhouse."—Friends, your Servant I.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

## AN EPITAPH

THIS was the clerk of Pennington. He held
That name with pious and with far-read men;
And when the Vicar shall in heaven have spelled
His prayers, he also shall respond, "Amen!"

And when Saint Michael's twain thin bells are rung
On earth, upon the sabbath-morn, he too
In heaven's choir, when matins shall be sung,
*Te Deum nos laudamus* shall renew.

T. E. CASSON.

## ARIADNE TO THE PLEIADES

(after Bacchus had crowned her with seven stars)

. . . . . .

RAIN in the shrivelled vines,
Storm in the thorn,
Waken a memory
Best unborn—

Of a Greek who took me
Like fruit from a bough
Where only the raindrops
Quiver now.

A. D. L. WILSON.

## A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE TO A REIGNING DUCHESS WHO IS TO REQUITE HIS LOVE WITH DEATH

LIFE smiled upon thee, set thee at her feast,
Clothed thee in purple and fine linen, bade
The heavens and earth contend to pleasure thee :
But me she nursed but rudely, with a touch
Of the cold duty of a stepdame's care,
Food, clothing, warmth—no more. But thee she loved,
For thou art fair, and tread'st a rose-strewn path,
Thou hast an eye for joyaunce, and the sweet,
Light, shallow laughter rippling from thy lips
Is but the echo of a lighter heart
'Neath an unwounded bosom . . . nay, but hear,
Droop not their lashes o'er thy cold child's eyes,
Blue as the young, crude, careless skies of March
E'er April's showers have made them soft with tears,
Nor take away thy pouting cherry lips,
Turning thy head disdainfully aside
Like some pale windflower, swaying on its stem,
Indignant at the kisses of the spring. . . .
Say, should the happy once be happy still
Who has not paid the price of happiness ?
Why, I paid down a pang for every joy,
And through long-suffering won the right to peace !
I fought once 'mong the foremost, gained a ridge,
Strove breast to breast with Death, and beat him back,
And ground my heel upon his blanchèd head,
Did deeds a god might boast of with a smile,
And crying, " Jesu, Mary ! " still pressed on,
And set Christ's flag on Paynim citadel . . .
And was degraded that I fought too well.
Thus Genius is ever crucified,
And cunning Talent throned, that fools may hail
A king enough above them to applaud,
But whom they still may rule and patronize,
Stand covered in the presence, be " well met,"
" 'Twas we who made you king ! "—the rabble's way ! . . .
That fight was but a symbol of my life—
Still scaling cold fruition's glacier peaks,

And, as I reached the summit, ever dashed
Through the chill, blue, illimitable air
To the dark vale of . . . Nothing ; ever tost
On swelling waves of hope that buoyed me up
To break beneath me as I touched the sky—
The higher crest, the deeper chasm still.
" A law of Nature," say'st thou ? Be it so !
Yet did God make a man to suffer thus ?
Still, without this, could I have dared rejoice,
Could I have laughed and sung while others wept,
Nor felt stern Pity pluck me by the sleeve
And point to their distress ? What right had one
In this vast, teeming lazar-house of pain
Men call the world, to loiter, rose in hand,
Drinking deep colour and strong perfume in,
Losing his soul through very loveliness—
Save one who also suffered ? God Himself
Had to make man and suffer with his woe
Ere He could win His Heaven, and reach the height
Of most divinest Godhead ? Yea, and I,
Into the general sum of the world's pain,
The debt we owe to Fate who made us men,
Have paid my more than share, and lo, the world
Is still my debtor ! . . .

* * *

Be yet my gentle bedesman. I have been
Too prone to cavil 'gainst my mortal fate,
Forgetting God's wide mercy. Could I choose,
I'd choose the same life still ; for I have known
Sunset and sunrise on the mountain-tops,
And battle's joy, and storms on stormy seas,
And forests after rain ; and I have felt
Some elements of greatness in my soul,
Few, but still palpable, and not so gross
For the world's hand to clutch at—some few scraps
Of virgin ore that could not stand the strain
Your alloyed gold admits of. Nay, but stay . . .
Will I blame God because He gave . . . Himself,
Set flashes of His Spirit in my soul,

Nor glory in His gifts that made of me
His fellow-comrade in the world's disdain?
I fought a foe, and find it was a friend—
Changing from form to form within my grasp,
My Fate has been my Proteus, and her last
Mysterious shape is Death, and in that shape
I conquer her. Too long I strove with shadows,
Fought for Fame, thought I would wring high praises
From the world, and crown myself with glory,
Forgot to lift mine eyes unto the hills,
And the calm skies beyond the gilded clouds.

Now at the last I meet Reality,
And go to seek my fortune 'mong the stars.

KATHLEEN MARY CARROLL.

## A MINOR SINGER

HE has not written much of classic myth or legend
Or penetrated far the storied shores of Greece:
He has forgot Persephone, Adonis,
Atalanta, and the long-sung golden fleece,
Prometheus, Tithonus and Aurora,
And all the nymphs that sported with Cyrene,
The shining isle of Paphos—loved by Venus—
Olympus, and the fountain of Pirene;
He has forgot Eurydice's sad beauty. . . .
He has not told the grandeur of old Rome;
He has not here remembered northern saga:
Asgard and Valhalla, the mighty Idrasil,
Balder the Beautiful, slain by bitter Loki,
Sigurd the Volsung, and proud Brunhild.
He has laid aside the cycle of King Arthur,
The romance of the Saints—that endless store—
Has put aside the mystic Eastern poems
And Oriental cult and rite and lore.
All these are for a fuller, later pleasure—
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam. . . .
He hears now but the windsong in the willow,

Sees only the familiar walls of home ;
Knows but the resurrection of the morning,
The benediction of the night, the stars, the trees ;
Catches the commonplace and daily drama. . . .
He seeks the quiet, simple paths of peace.

EDNA DAVIS ROMIG.

## BURY ST. EDMUND'S

THE buildings stand—the builders, where are they ?
Lost in the landscape of forgotten years.
Man, sooner than his structures, disappears,
Of finer, but of less enduring, clay.
But here their various achievements stay,
Their beauteous work the ancient town endears—
The fane that fascinates, the house that cheers,
The imposing ruin, grand in its decay.
Ascribe them honour who so nobly wrought,
With such devotion and such strength of will ;
Who, loving it, to all their labour brought
Such patience, pains, such cunning and such skill.
Alas ! that we, by such examples taught,
Should plan so poorly and should build so ill.

W. S. GODFREY.

## IN THRALL TO POESIE

FAST in chains I cannot feel,
Checked by walls I cannot see,
I am held a bounden thrall,
Slave of Tyrant Poesie.

Pent by bars more strong than steel,
Chained by rhythm, lashed with rhyme,
Such the fate that doth befall
Those too weak to grow sublime.

Lo ! for pity I appeal—
Those who work for Prose are free—
Yet am I a bounden thrall,
Held by Tyrant Poesie !

SIOLA HAWKER.

# DEAD RIDES SIR MORTEN

*(From the Danish)*

SIR MORTEN rode in the greenwood,
And there he got his bane,
For a deadly sickness seized him
Ere he won home again.
*Dead rides Sir Morten of Fuglsang.*

With mickle dule and sorrow
His body to earth they bore,
But all at the hour of mirk midnight
He mounted his steed once more.

It was young Sir Folmar
That rode by holt and hill,
And it was the dead Sir Morten
That followed behind him still.

"Hold in, hold in, Sir Folmar,
Hold in and speak with me!
I swear by my troth as a Christian knight
I'll work no woe to thee."

"Oh, why art thou risen, Sir Morten,
To ride by wood and wold?
No longer ago than yesterday
We laid thee in kirkyard mould."

"I ride not thus for pleasure,
Nor yet for dule and pine,
But all for the greed of one green mead
I wrongfully swore was mine.

"I ride not thus for silver,
Nor yet for a golden gage,
But all for the sake of the orphan bairn
I robbed of his heritage.

"Go seek Mettelille, my lady,
And bear her my behest,
For if she yield the stolen field
So shall my soul find rest.

" And if Mettelille, my lady,
Heed not thy words eftsoon,
So bid her look by the high-loft door
Where stand my silken shoon.

" Bid her behold my silken shoon
Beside the high-loft door,
For all at the hour of mirk midnight
With blood they shall brim o'er."

" Ride back, ride back, Sir Morten,
Thy weary bones to rest !
I swear by my troth as a Christian knight
I'll bear her thy behest."

Black was the hawk of Sir Morten,
And black Sir Morten's hound,
And black of hue the ghostly crew
That followed to kirkyard mound.

Oh, swift was his leal lady
His bidding to obey,
And Sir Morten lies in his resting grave
Asleep till the Judgment Day.
*Dead rides Sir Morten of Fuglsang.*

E. M. SMITH-DAMPIER.

Author of *Danish Ballads*, etc

## TIME

BEFORE Creation have I been
And many sights of wonder seen ;
For in this world's chaotic state
I roamed her regions desolate,
And since remarked each small event
With ever wakeful eyes intent ;
And yet I envy Man his lot,
For he may dream, and I may not.

HERBERT L. BLUEN.

# FRANCIS JAMMES

THE imaginative power is but rarely at work in a superficial realist, who is satisfied with the mere copying of external traits and with the representation of his sensations; it is, on the contrary, very active in a deep observer of nature, because, under the bare surface of things, which the former stops at, the latter descries their essence and creates from it the poetical image. He reproduces colours and sounds by expressing the feelings of which they are the signs and the cause, as Beethoven does in the *Pastoral Symphony*, mirroring clouds and sky, and the rustling cornfield, and the singing rill in the serenity and joy of rhythm and cadence. And the melodies of Francis Jammes are the reverberations of the living music of meadow and stream. The poet adds to the work of fantasy the transfiguring and exalting influence of feeling; and Jammes's lyrics are saved from the dryness to which are easily susceptible descriptive poems—often reduced to mere inventories—by his passionate moods.

In his first books his landscapes are pervaded by a thrilling sense of joy, and aglow with a lustre that makes subdued tones flash out into brilliant hues. "I shall say to the children: 'Give the blackbird some water—when it can fly we will let it out—so that it may live happy among the green pearls the shower hangs, laughing, on the blue hazel-trees.'"[1] In his later work he obtains effects of austere beauty by widening and deepening the background of his scenery with a few broad strokes. "The snow, like a great mirror, has thrown back to me the moonlight and its ineffable mystery."[2]

His poems show a gradual, steady ascent from nature to God; the splendour of creation pointed to the effulgence of the Creator. At first he only admired exteriorities; then, beneath the surface of things he perceived the workings of the divine mind, and all the obscure universe arose into the living light of God. Now to him, "nourished with ineffable Bread," a new vision of earth bursts into sight; the earth is no more the grotesque nightmare "in

[1] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1917, p. 206.
[2] *La Vierge et les Sonnets*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1919, p. 152.

which things seemed surprised to exist—only God had planted the lavender in the garden, and the heather and gorse on the moors—only God, with a very sweet mystery, had cut out of the green sunlit grass, this cockerel, —and this butterfly out of the white pea-blossom." [1]

We notice in his pictures, together with vivid translucencies of colour, a subtle interpenetration of spiritual and material elements—" blue embers, fallen from a seraph's censer, live in the cornflower " [2]—and he extends this method of painting to wide scenery:—" while crossing the wood, under the humid morning sun—I could only see my surroundings in flashes through the black thickness of the leaves—and there was, in my heart and my eyes, the clarity of valleys, and mountains as clear as the purest thought—and violet peaks, and a rosy quivering on the mountain-tops." [3] He sees the eternal brightness above the sombre storm of life ; the universe is no more a baffling, unsolvable riddle ; the images of earth and sky are set into a perfect harmony. " It is Thou who sheddest lustre into the night which is in my eyes—without Thee every thing is mad and wild." [4] His religious thought culminates in a complete abandonment to the divine will, in a sweet repose in God, in the love of His mysterious ways ; the soul is kneeling to the adorable law. " The nearer the poet went to God, the more his soul—his ardent, sad, and bitter soul —knelt before mystery. Other gardens opened before him—yet so beautiful and so dark that their leaves perplexed him who yearned to see—and the supreme beauty was the vast blackness into which his heart ventured—like a man who plunges into deep water." [5] His feeling of nature is interpenetrated with his religious conception, with his love for all creatures, a love born of a sense of brotherhood in God. This love of simple things, as well as of humble souls, is indeed a dominant note in his song. " You will understand how much things are blessed—and how I receive from God those vague harmonies—that rise from

[1] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, 161.
[2] *Les Géorgiques chrétiennes*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1921, p. 120.
[3] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1898, p. 265.
[4] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, p. 161.
[5] *Idem*, 1918, p. 160.

my heart, as from a censer, towards the humility of very dark souls—towards a sick ear of corn, or a little lizard, that slips into the cranny of a crumbling wall." [1] His intercourse with nature has been so long and close, his observation so keen and loving, that colours and lines have sunk into his mind, and his soul is almost identified with the thing he delights in. He has absorbed hues and shapes, and they fill his memory. "I have in my heart stony slopes, ravines—whole villages full of obscure sorrows—and flocks of sheep bleating towards the whole azure of the mountain tops." [2] His word-painting is based on a strict fidelity to nature, his art is founded on truth; hence its vitality. His descriptions are made on direct notations, and, as he paints with the precision and vividness of an artist working with his eye upon the subject, the freshness of the first impression clings to his picture. The exactness of his notations may be seen in an epithet of colour—"the *milky-blue* periwinkles"—"the pulmonary, whose power is *violet and wine-red*—and whose leaf is of the hue of *verdigris*, *white-spotted*, hairy, and very rough," [3]—"the pigeons of *rainbow colours and slate*" [4]—or in a verb of motion—"the rail looking for tiny snails *glides* down the rain-drenched meadows." [5] The landscape is evoked with a few careful notations, with a few particulars, selected with keen and original insight and painted with broad, deliberate touch. Look, for instance, at this winter scene: "The mist smells of smoke—a fountain-jet seems motionless as made of ice, upon the sky of dirty wool—which withered leaves are drifting through." [6]

Francis Jammes is to be ranked with such singers of simple, homely life as Wordsworth, Cowper and Crabbe and particularly the last, whose minuteness of observation and scrupulous exactitude of detail he often closely recalls; there is, of course, no imitation, but a kinship of mind in their love of nature and of man in their humblest and poorest appearances. Jammes feels that he was born to lead a simple, lonely life in the country; yet there still lives in

[1] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 50.
[2] *Idem*, p. 43.
[3] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 121.
[4] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, p. 152.
[5] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 184.
[6] *Idem*, p. 112.

his inmost heart a yearning for a higher solitude, on the mountains, where he would commune with God and nature more intimately, where he would tend his flock among the blue gentians and the far-gleaming glaciers.[1] But, more intense than this desire, there is in him a deep aspiration to the mystic quiet of a religious life, to " the peace that passeth understanding." He says in one of his most beautiful poems : " I have seen come back the things of last year ; storm, spring, withered lilac-trees; I have sipped white wine in the black presbytery, and my soul is always terrible, sweet and sad. Why has not my heart always been alone ? I should not have this horrible void in my heart's depths, and, a peasant priest, I should have adorned the crosses in the churchyard with rose campion, fennel, and the flowers of the flag. Our exterior life would have been but little changed—O my mother, who would have carried into the garden the blinding reflection of the water in the watering-can—to pour it on the flower-beds granulated with the blue morning shadows." [2] This feeling of charity draws him farther and farther to God. His aim is now to sing His praise and to give Him the treasures of his mind and heart. The poet " strives to be truly His, in faith and works," and his prevailing mood is now a continual sense of His presence ; in the silence of his secluded life he hears divine whisperings, and, yielding to the heavenly call, his soul aspires to its last and only goal, to its home and eternal dwelling. He seeks God alone, and yearns to rest in Him, to be dissolved in His love. We seem to hear in his lines an echo of the cry of St. Augustine : " Too late I loved Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new ! too late I loved Thee ! And, behold, Thou wert within, and I abroad, and there I searched for Thee—Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee. Things held me far from Thee, which, unless they were in Thee, were not at all. Thou touchedst me, and I burned for Thy peace." [3] The poet relates in his later poems his spiritual fight, his ascent, and tells us in a plain and moving language his regret of

[1] " Was I not born to live upon the mountain-tops—among the scattered snows of my flock of sheep ? " *Idem*, p. 31.

[2] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 153. [3] *Confessions*, Ch. X.

being late, of having lingered too long on the ways of doubt and error, of having delayed to love " God, through Whom I have sought the love of the Absolute, that lacked to sin." [1] And he wants his song to be a prayer, as all nature is. " The snow, like a great mirror, reverberates the moonlight and its ineffable mystery ;—I think that the snow is a sweet prayer which needs no words and *knows* nothing else but to shine." [2] He wishes to be awake from the dream of earthly life, to be out of appearances, he is waiting for the revelation of the inmost reality, yearning for eternal truth. " The April skies—veined like a blue agate—through the bare boughs of the rugged plane-trees—will burst open,—letting see at last the true Heavens." [3] " I want to see—because I am steeped in this lie which is the life that is not *the Life*. May God plunge me into *what is*.—Things, I have not yet seen you." [4] In his ardent desire to see life as it really *is*, he transfers it out of Time into Immortality ; every action acquires an infinite importance and is final in its moral value ; every moment, everything prolongs itself into Eternity. In the first elegy of the *Deuil des Primevères*, dedicated to Maurice and Eugénie De Guerin, in whom he feels two kindred spirits, he says : " The blood-red wall-flower on the ruined perron, how is it then this flower in the divine City ? The orchard is eternal, the grove is eternal. . . . Hedges of roses, golden Junes . . . dusky greeneries of the torrid forests ! Love shall strike you with eternity."

Every poet carries his message. Jammes's is a religious sense of pity ; we perceive in his poetry a soul deeply wounded by life and therefore keenly alive to the sorrows of all beings ; he feels acutely the anguish and misery of man's existence, the dumb pain of nature ; suffering creatures are by him passionately loved. " May the pity that you feel for the old servant-maid teach you to venerate the trembling servants whose hand cannot carry any more too heavy weights." " May the pity that you feel for the palsied dog teach you to dress the wounds of all martyr-

[1] *La Vierge et les Sonnets*, p. 13.
[2] *Idem*, p. 152.
[3] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, p. 13.
[4] *Idem*, p. 10.

doms and to feel compassion of the meanest animals." [1] His feeling of pity extends to animals and things, to the ill-treated dog, the wounded sparrow; full of intense pathos is the tragic "idyll" *Poet and Bird*; he is deeply moved by the sight of a dying ear of corn and by the vain yearning of flowers. "The perfumes spoke to each other in the silence; and one felt a dumb effusion from plant to plant; and resignation brooded over this isolated realm." [2] "May the pity you feel for your old mother teach you to venerate the black, bitter wrinkles under the eyes of trembling old women. May the pity you feel for the old well full of roses—where is the water of baptism and the water of death—teach you to venerate and love the dumb things." [3] He understands the language of familiar objects, the melancholy look of old furniture [4]; "these noises and motions are but the gestures of these objects and their expression, as the voice and look are among our expressions and gestures." [5] Even the well is endowed with speech; he sings while the old servant draws water for the poet who is dying.[6] In the playing of a fife there are the sounds of the fields which the peasant's breath draws from the hollow reed, and he hears in the mournful melody "the thorny furze singing beneath the scythe—as a martyr dying in ecstasy." [7] This pathos is sometimes shown in a simile, as when he says that "he keeps silent, without complaining,—like a wounded bird between two stones." [8]

The poet's heart is mysteriously connected with the past. He often goes back to the eighteenth century, which is singularly attractive to him, and he has painted his dreams of that epoch in his tales *Almaide d'Autremont et Clara*

[1] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 334.

[2] *Le Roman du Lièvre*, p. 323.—"When I notice a sick ear of corn among healthy ones—and I see the livid spot on its grains—I have a very distinct intuition of the suffering of this thing—I feel in myself the pain of these cellules—and then the desire comes to me of tearing my handkerchief to bind up this ear of corn." *Idem* p. 216.

[3] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 334.

[4] "The fall of a half-consumed branch—the swaying of the candle's flame—the starts of the pot's lids—all this forms a sacred language—more accessible to my understanding than the speech of most men."—*Le Roman du Lièvre*, p. 225.

[5] *Idem*.

[6] *La Mort du Poète*, in *De l'Angelus*, p. 328.

[7] *Les Géorgiques chrétiennes*, p. 91.

[8] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 169.

*d'Ellebeuse*, studies of morbidly passionate girls, reflections of his morbid feelings in that period of his life; these portraits of souls intoxicated by the deadly power of love are like pastels of La Cour, pale visages with black, burning eyes, tragic and intensely alive. Here, and in several of his poems, he lives in ancient parks and gardens of exotic trees, among beds of old-fashioned flowers, in dusky rooms with furniture of rosewood and mahogany inlaid with ivory. He shows that melancholy yearning towards beautiful, time-worn things, which Robert Browning has so magnificently expressed in the lyric sung by Aprile in *Paracelsus*.

> Heap cassia, sandal-buds . . .
> And shred dim perfume, like a cloud
> From chamber long to quiet vowed,
> With mothed and dropping arras hung,
> Mouldering the lute and books among
> Of queen, long dead, who lived there young.

"If you listen to my elegiac tunes," Jammes says,[1] "you will understand with what spells I enchant myself—of what ancient flowers my soul is composed—and why some oldish songs seem to linger as a dying sun in my voice." Although his subjects are mainly restricted to Orthez and his native fields, he likes to remember the scenery of West India, the Antilles, where his forefathers lived, and these ancestral memories bring a breath of exotic perfumes into his lines; they stir in him a nostalgic feeling of a tropical land, of "a great sadness brooding over the white shore and the black-green sea," of a churchyard, where "humming birds are hovering among large white chalices with black pistils." Side by side with these dreams there arises in his poems all the melancholy charm of that borderland between France and Spain where he was born. We see the glycine farming with its clusters of pale-blue tears, the door of the cottage, or the flame-coloured autumn trees, motionless, shrouded in opal mist, stretching their branches over the grassy slopes where the meadow-saffron lights up its tiny mauve tapers. We feel the desolate, sultry stillness of Sunday afternoons, only broken by a wasp droning

[1] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 25.

through the empty house, or the exalting freshness of the wood in the joyous singing of the shower. We see the village among the rocks and the old women " with neckerchiefs as bright-coloured as toys." [1] There are curious notations of effects of light, of the changeful, almost fantastic hues of certain days and hours : " the rainy evening full of yellow light" [2]; " over the hill, after the shower, the rainbow blooms like a great pale orchard" [3]; " on the worn thresholds, where the old women sit to spin, there lies a reflection of the blue sky, as, near a river bank, the kingfisher alights, its vivid plumage aglow." [4] He lays his tints boldly because he is sure of the inmost truth of his apparently strange perceptions : " in the autumn morning, along the brambles, in which the grey spider is weaving rainbows" [5]; " the blue cabbage in the kitchen garden"; [6] —" girls are wandering in parks where the blue peacock is walking on the green lawns " [7]; the wings of a butterfly are " sisters to our starry nights or to blue days riddled with cherries." [8] He is usually set, owing to the exactness of his notations from nature, among the " realists " ; yet " realism " has no proper meaning in art and poetry ; a poet or a painter always is a visionary soul, that is, they descry the " true reality " beyond appearances. The difference between the so-called " realist " and the idealist lies in that the latter tries to shape new forms out of the elements presented by reality, while the former simply tries to portray the existing forms just as they are. Francis Jammes belongs to this class, his æsthetic principles being the exact opposite of those of the symbolists ; he exalts the magic of reality, not of dreams ; " far from vain, though enchanted, dreams, I have drawn my genius from reality." [9] Yet he was lifted to a mystic vision of life and nature by sorrow and lonely meditation ; he questioned his inexplicable sadness, he wandered on the desolate plains of his spiritual land, and in his solitude he heard the imperious call of God. He found at last in the heart of faith the unique

[1] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 42.
[2] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 41.
[3] *Idem*, p. 243.
[4] *Idem*, p. 266.
[5] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 9.
[6] *Idem*, p. 163.
[7] *Idem*, p. 19.
[8] *Géorgiques chrétiennes*, p. 125.
[9] *Idem*, p. 103.

balm to the slow martyrdom of life. He was not led to religious belief out of the darkness of agnosticism by a sudden light or by a painful, inmost struggle; but by a gradual change of mind; faith illumined his sombre heart with a spontaneous dawn. It was the vision Francis Thompson alluded to in his beautiful lines:

> When thy seeing blindeth thee
> To what thy fellow-mortals see;
> When their sight to thee is sightless; . . .
> Their living, death; . . .

Henceforth his attitude to life was determined; and it is not difficult to trace in his subsequent conception of the world the enlightenment brought out by faith; he woke up to spiritual realities, and to the ethical side of our existence; the mystic feeling added to the poetical intensity of his lines, spreading a new glow over familiar objects and surroundings; in his descriptions even the commonplace and the obvious are clothed with a new light. His creative force is drawn directly from nature and the ineffable sweetness of pious meditation. Instead of the vague spiritualism of Wordsworth, we see in Jammes the clear fervour of a well-defined creed, the pure and steady light of Faith; his lines are mainly outbursts of love, effusions to God gushing from his inmost heart; and his main purpose is now purification through humility of life and communion with God. "It is the Bread which is God, through the Spirit and the Flesh—which gives nourishment, and cures the illness of this life." [1] All his later work is an expression of thankfulness to the Saviour, a feeling which is often quickened into ardour by a loving abandonment and repose in the Divine Will, by a complete donation of self, by the fervour of a soul that is ready to suffer and even craving for pain as penance for sins. "I have only my sorrow, and I want nothing else but her. She has always been faithful to me, and she is still so. Why should I be angry with her, since at the hour, when my soul crushed the depths of my heart, she was to be found sitting at my side." [2] And his mystic way ends with the crowning thought of a holy

[1] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, p. 216. [2] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 179.

death. The conception of death is beautifully expressed in a poem of *Le Deuil des Primevères*, "*Prayer to ask for a star*"; "O my God, let me go and take a star; perhaps it will soothe my sick heart—and if this star is death?—even then, give it to me—as one gives a gold coin to a poor, who is sitting, hungry, near a ditch. Remember, my God, that, when a child, I brought holly boughs to Your crib; could You not give me back a little of what I have done for You—and, if You think it can heal my troubled soul, cannot You give me a star—since I want to lay it upon my heart, which is, to-night, cold, empty, black?" [1] His only wish is now to be a singer of God. "I want a bird to sing on the Cross; and will you leave me, O redbreast of the soul? My God, on Your brows, encircled by a hedge of thorns, I will sing throughout Your agony; but, when the dreadful crown breaks into flowers, You will let the bird build its nest among them." [2]

In his early poems the thought of God is absent; in utter solitude, left to himself, the poet felt an intolerable gloom weigh upon his heart. "How may I summon up courage?—I cannot weep any more. What is there in my heart? It is silent, terrible, torn to shreds. You, whom I have loved, lead me by the hand towards what men have named Death, and let fall, for ever, your smile on my mortal way, your smile as clear as an azure sky mirrored in water. Remember your sad childhood, and the birds that made you weep, so sad behind the bars of the cage.—I die of pity; I should like to weep, alone, as a mother wiping with her shawl the tomb of her son." [3] It is at first a yearning towards the grave; afterwards, in the infinite sadness there blooms the flower of resignation to the sorrows of life, recognized as a just punishment for sin. Then there comes into his heart an entrancing sweetness, in which grief and anguish, weariness and the pangs and stings of existence melt and resolve into a chord of peace. The soul withdraws from the glare and sultriness of the worldly day to the coolness and azure calm of the mystic night. "The darkness in which You hide has lured

[1] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 169. [2] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, p. 185.
[3] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 247.

me. Give your love to this traveller, who, wandering under the beech-trees, prefers what the Night conceals to what he sees." [1] From the beginning of his literary life we are struck by the gravity of his outlook on life and the seriousness of his art. Jammes never was a trifler with words, as he never delighted in a vain play of false and startling ideas. His return to faith can be easily conjectured from his early poems, where, side by side with a deep feeling for nature, a mystic tendency looms out of the baneful mist of materialism; but this tendency does not clearly appear, it is not distinctly uttered, until 1898, when in his *Quatorze Prières* he stated a definite attitude of mind. In his book of poems, *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir* (1890), we see him already rising from the marshes of sin to the limpid atmosphere of mysticism; the religious tendency, however, first asserts its predominance in *Clairières dans le Ciel.* (1891). In his later works, both in poetry and in prose, the supernatural element holds the foremost place; in *Les Géorgiques chrétiennes* (1894), for instance, the rural works are enfolded by a divine atmosphere. A heavenly blessing floats as a light and a fragrance over the harvest-field, the vine-clad hills, the peasants at work. Jammes has here created a mystic Arcadia; rustic life is portrayed with all its prosaic circumstances, and yet raised to poetry by the all-pervading religious feeling. The seven books of *Les Géorgiques chrétiennes* spring from a soul that perceives in the labours of men, framed by nature's beauty, a hymn to God. Like James Thomson in his *Seasons*, the poet gives variety to his composition by inserting episodes—such as the moving narrative of the beggar's death in the winter night—into the descriptive texture. The work is Virgilian in character, but not as regards the supreme elegance of form; we notice, on the contrary, in Jammes's style a lack of finish, which is not due so much to the simplicity of expression as to the excessive fluency of his verse, and to his treatment of the couplet; he handles it with facility, but he did not look for subtle effects of harmony and inward changes of rhythm, and therefore it appears sometimes clumsy and humdrum. He has shaped

[1] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, p. 175.

a fit instrument to his task—a homely speech for homely subjects—yet his utterance lacks intensity and remains nerveless. Nevertheless, in this book, and in the preceding ones, his mode of expression—his natural, easy, colloquial speech—careless of dissonances, regardless of effect—and the limpid flow of his lines, never marred by obscurity, represent a healthy reaction to the artificial elegance of the later symbolists. And this utter simplicity of diction allows him to express the refinement of his sensations and the subtlety of his thought in a better way than an elaborate form. The veracity of his lucid phrase, the directness of portraiture, enable him vividly to evoke his impressions and emotions. His calm and terse diction is various in effects and rich of suggestions, like the snow, of which he says that "the single tone hides a numberless prism." [1] His style is sincere, and therefore original; yet some influences have been at work while he was shaping his poetical instrument. To Verlaine he is indebted, both in his descriptive and in his spiritual poems; from him he learned a manner of expression apparently careless, yet subtly wrought, a *naïveté* full of art, an extreme directness and brevity of notation; his landscapes show some features analogous to Verlaine's scenery, the fine effects of lights and sound of fields "bathed in a splendour so white that the shadows are rosy," [2] of the Sunday morning in which one listens to "the bells, like flute notes in a milky-white sky." [3] By him he was taught the ethereal touch of "the dove whose flight blends so well with the light that it is soon but a prayer," [4] —and the refined realism with which he has caught and fixed the short-lived charm of a fleeting impression: "The October anemones sleep on the gilded lawns. A redbreast sings to the muddy, pale sun." [5] But we do not find in Jammes the changing, vaporous hues, the suggestive vagueness of outline of the poet of the *Romances sans paroles*; his technique is quite different; clearness and distinctness of line and colour are the outstanding characteristics of his word-pictures. Relying on his sincerity of observation, he often permits himself audacities of touch in his descrip-

[1] *De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir*, p. 207. [2] *Sagesse*, X.
[3] *Idem*, VIII. [4] *Clairières dans le Ciel*, p. 211. [5] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 37.

tions.[1] We are far from the hard glitter of the " Parnassiens " ; he rather reminds us of the melancholy grace, the dewy delicacy of Wordsworth's and Collins's landscapes, of their haunted loneliness and mystic charm. " I feel the night on myself, while it lies on the fields—when the sun is going out, in the evening, as a lamp. I do not see into myself. I am like the evening, which conceals from us the mowers of the hay of azure fields across the meadows of thought of my soul." [2] His pathos quickens his naïve lines with the hidden fervour of universal life, with that " pain of bliss," which is " to move, to breathe, to be." [3] And it is this depth of emotion, and this sincerity and simplicity of style that have given him a prominent place among contemporary poets.

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*Torino, dicembre*, 1927.

[1] The grazing flocks on the mountain-side are compared to " white bushes."—*De l' Angelus*, p. 25. " On the *blue* of the meadows . . . in the evening, when the moon, high up in the sky, rains its *damp* light on the forehead of the russet cows—whose horns still carry a bit of sunlight. . . ."—*Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 18.
[2] *Le Deuil des Primevères*, p. 173.
[3] Shelley, *Prom. Unb.*, III, *IV*, 125.

* * *

## SERVANTS OF HUMANITY

AMID the fleeting ages this only shall endure :
The soul of service—all but this, phantasmal and unsure.

What noble names shine out for aye like beacons in the night ?
What jewelled lives of service upon a lonely height ?

On ONE we speak not—silent, the heart, the spirit thrills
To hear the music ringing from the Galilean hills.

Gautama and Saint Francis, in the east and in the west,
Alike in godlike pity, that would not let them rest.

The prophets and the thinkers : Confucius the wise,
Grave Socrates, and Plato, who have aided men to rise.

The law-giver of Israel, Teresa, and Saint Paul,
And Joan the Maid, and Damien, who heard the leper's call.

They gave, they strove and suffered for love of human-kind,
With Livingstone and Lincoln, with the monarchs of the mind :

Beethoven, deaf : his music a feast for other ears,
And broken-hearted Dante in his travail and his tears.

The Greek who moulded beauty, and the Roman, framing laws,
The pioneers of science, all who served the common cause :

They stretch the hand of friendship, those giants who have gone :
They served their generations, and they bid us follow on.

The simple heroes, valiant in war's relentless tide,
Who laughed in face of danger, who stood their ground, and died ;

The young, intrepid chivalry, the riders of the sky,
Who served aloft unfearing, though death were swooping nigh !

The seaman and the miner who will go to save a mate,
By fearful odds undaunted, brave challengers of fate ;

The humble, toiling women, and the mother by the hearth :
They serve—what greater honour—theirs the glory of the earth !

MARGARET ORMISTON.

* * *

The Poets' Fellowship is not a separate and independent organization. It is a group within The Poetry Society, embracing the producing members, and constitutes an informal POETRY REVIEW and POETRY OF TO-DAY Contributors' Club. Occasional special meetings for this class of members are arranged, grouped round the New Verse Editor, who is responsible for the special section of THE POETRY REVIEW—an extension of the functions and influence of the Premium Editor. Members entitled to inclusion within this inner circle are asked to advise us when they publish a new book or do any notable work in connection with poetry so that they may receive their meed of recognition.

# MR. MASEFIELD'S NARRATIVE POEMS

IN a conversation with a friend who is a teacher of literature in a large school, and so is in a position to form the literary taste of a large body of the coming generation, my failure to admire the Narrative Poems of John Masefield drew upon me an outburst of the most amazed indignation. I was accused of being "old-fashioned," of not keeping abreast of modern methods and modern thought; I was referred to the critics, and finally I was informed that in America all the serious students of the universities travel about with a copy of Masefield in their pockets. "A very good thing for Masefield's pocket," I replied, "but it does not say much for the students' discrimination."

Reflecting later on this conversation, I was led to consider how great is the responsibility of those critics who have assumed the direction of the public taste. In modern times criticism is conducted on the principle that the true function of criticism is praise. That criticism, in order to be helpful, must be constructive, and not destructive. But the right application of this principle requires very great judgment and discrimination. When a writer's work is unequal, it is not good criticism to lavish praise on that which is good, and to ignore, or still worse, condone, that which is commonplace, slovenly, or even bad. Such criticism is productive of two evils—it is calculated to encourage the faults of the writer, which in course of time are likely so to increase as to swamp his merits—and it is misleading to the unthinking public who take their opinions wholesale from the critics.

Leaving the Ballads and Lyrics out of discussion for the present, it cannot be for the good of the reading public that such slovenly and commonplace verse as Mr. Masefield has produced in his narrative poems should receive such lavish and undiscriminating praise from those critics whose responsibility it is to maintain the traditions of English Literature and of the English language. Mr. Masefield is a man who has been so misled by the indiscreet and unbalanced eulogies lavished on him by the critics, that he has

lost his way ; and so dazzled by the sheep-like acclamations of an unthinking public, that he has lost his head. When, in the early part of the century, he wrote his *Salt Water Ballads* he might have been described as a " promising " poet. Had the critics at that time fulfilled their proper function, which is to sift the grain from the chaff, they would have dwelt on the fact that the " promise " of these poems lies in those passages descriptive of the sea and of ships, and that their weakness lies in those passages which aim at the depiction of character. Instead of which, the critics hailed with no uncertain voice the " originality " of the poems ; and the public, suffering then as now from a craze for originality, responded to the verdict of the critics with loud acclamations of this new poet who showed both originality and genius.

It was then that Mr. Masefield arrived at the parting of the ways, hesitated—and took the lower path. Mr. Masefield's *métier* is the poetry of the sea, of ships, and of nature. These are the things he knows and loves. Had he been content to develop his muse along these lines he might have fulfilled the promise of his earlier work. At this juncture he would have done well to remember George Borrow's warning, " Oh ye gifted ones, follow your calling. Follow resolutely the one straight path before you : let neither obstacles nor temptations induce ye to leave it ; bound along it if you can ; if not, on hands and knees follow it ; perish in it if need be. Turn into other paths, and for a momentary advantage or gratification ye have sold your inheritance, your immortality."

But, alas for Mr. Masefield ! His contemporaries acclaimed and demanded originality, and—were willing to pay for it ; and so Mr. Masefield decided, at all costs, to be original. Now in 1928 " he has his reward "—he is a best seller and a public idol ; but—as far as his work goes, if, for a poet, to write imperishable verse is to achieve immortality, he is in grave danger of losing " his immortality." Most assuredly he has as yet produced no work which can rightly be thought of as imperishable. He has descended from the promise of such lyrics as *Christmas Eve at Sea*, *The West Wind*, and *Sea Fever*, to the *banalité* of such lines as these—

" Who is he, then ? " She answered, " Shepherd Ern,
A pleasant man, and a friend of mine."
" By cripes, then, Anna, drop him, he's a swine."

. . . . . .

" You must have faith, I give you all I can.
What, can't I say ' Good evening ' to a man ? "
" Yes," he replied, " but not a man like him."
" Why not a man like him ? " she said, " What next ? "
By this they'd reached her cottage in the dim,
Among the daisies that the cold had kexed.
" Because I say. Now, Anna, don't be vexed."
" I'm more than vexed," she said, " with words like these.
" You say ; indeed ! How dare you ! Leave me, please."

which are typical of the dialogue in all his narrative poems.

Of Mr. Masefield's narrative poems, that which best illustrates his strength, and his weakness, is *Dauber*. This poem has been so much praised as to suggest that it has no defects at all. It has been praised moreover for just those qualities which constitute its weakness. The theme is attractive, certainly ; it would make an excellent framework for the building of a short story. But the difference between a prose narrative and a verse narrative is precisely this, that in prose the merit of the work lies chiefly in the power and interest of the plot, which, if sufficiently strong may out-weigh deficiencies of literary style ; while in verse the first consideration is the quality of the verse, and defects in this cannot be compensated by excellence of theme.

On careful analysis it will be seen that the merit of this poem lies solely in those passages which are descriptive of the sea, the snow, the storm, the haven after the storm. These are passages of real beauty and distinction such as :

Darker it grew, still darker, and the stars
Burned golden, and the fiery fishes came.
The wire note loudened from the straining spars,
The street-clocks clacked together always the same ;
The rushing fishes streaked the sea with flame,
Racing the one speed noble as their own :
What unknown joy was in those fish unknown !

And all the air seemed full of gradual moan,
As though in these cloud chasms the horns were blowing
The mort for gods cast out and overthrown,
Or for the eyeless sun plucked out and going.
Slow the low gradual moan came in the snowing.

. . . . . .

Working aloft they saw the mountain tower,
Snow to the peak ; they heard the launchmen shout ;
And bright along the way the lights came out.

And then the night fell dark, and all night long
The pointed mountain pointed at the stars,
Frozen, alert, austere ; the eagle's song
Screamed from her desolate screes and splintered scars.
On her intense crags where the air is sparse
The stars looked down ; their many golden eyes
Watched her and burned, burned out and came to rise.

Silent the finger of the summit stood,
Icy in pure, thin air, glittering with snows.
Then the sun's coming turned the peak to blood,
And in the rest-house the muleteers arose.
And all day long, where only the eagle goes,
Stones, loosened by the sun, fall ; the stones falling
Till empty gorge on gorge with echoes calling.

Contrast these with the character drawing, in the passages in which Dauber interviews the Bosun and the Captain ; not only is the verse crude, but the situation is artificial in the extreme—

He clambered down holding the ruined things.
" Bo-sun " he called, " look here, did you do these :
Wipe off my paints and cut them into strings,
And smear them till you can't tell chalk from cheese ?
Don't stare, but did you do it ? Answer, please."
The Bosun turned : " I'll give you a thick ear !
Do it ? I didn't. Get to hell from here ! "

and his interview with the Captain, which, both in theme and verse is weak all through—

" Please, sir, they spoiled my drawings." " Who did ? " " They."
" Who's they ? " " I don't quite know, sir."
" Don't quite know, sir ? "
" Whom do you complain of ? " " No one." " No one ? " " No, sir."
" Well, then, go forward till you've found them. Go, sir,

If you complain of someone then I'll see,
Now get to hell and don't come bothering me."

After this, we have the captain of a tramp steamer calling a " hand " up in order to make further enquiries about his lost sketches in senseless repetition of the former futile interview. Had verses been in question the absurdity would have been too obvious to be overlooked, but because these are sketches, and the hero is Mr. Masefield's creation, we are asked to accept this as part of Mr. Masefield's realism.

" Painter," the Captain called. The Dauber came.
" What is all this talk of drawings ? What's the matter ? "
" They spoiled my drawings, sir ! " " Well, who's to blame ?
*The long-boat's there for no one to get at her ;*
You broke the rules, and if you choose to scatter
Gear up and down where it's no right to be,
And suffer as result, don't come to me.
Your place is in the round-house, and your gear
Belongs where you belong. Who spoiled your things ?
Find out who spoiled your things and fetch him here."
" But, sir, they cut the canvas into strings."
" I want no argument nor questionings,
Go back where you belong and say no more,
And please remember that you're not on shore."

As verse this is styleless and commonplace. As realism it is absurd. Where, then, lies its merit ? In *Dauber* as a whole the proportion of these styleless, inept passages is so great as to out-weigh the merit of the admittedly beautiful descriptive passages of sea and of nature. If Mr. Masefield chooses to clog his natural genius with the weight of his artificial realism, a critic can hardly be blamed for judging the whole and not the part.

As we read through Mr. Masefield's other narrative poems, on which his vogue chiefly rests, we see more and more clearly that this failure to make good the promise of his early years lies in his forced efforts to attain realism and in his inability to depict character.

*The Everlasting Mercy* is attractive only in theme and in title—(Mr. Masefield certainly has a *flair* for choosing titles)—but there has never been any character in literature more unreal in action and speech than the hero (or should I say villain ?) of the piece. His attempt to be original in the

description of the sordid characters and environment of the public-house succeed only in being revolting, except in passages in which their unreality arouses our mirth. To achieve originality by writing such revolting passages as—

> " From three long hours of gin and smokes
> And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes
> A warmish night and windows shut
> The room stank like a fox's gut."

or such ridiculous passages as—

> " And *fifteen* arms went round her waist
> And yet men ask " Are bar-maids chaste ? "

is to pay a very heavy price for the achievement.

In *The Widow in the Bye-Street* the interest of the story holds us, but the verse is weak throughout. An attempt is made to create an impression of virility by making " Jimmy " make frequent use of such expressions as " By crimes," " By cripes," " My God," " By God." This is not an ornament to the verse, which nowhere throughout the poem achieves distinction, and it fails to create reality in depiction of the character. The late editor of THE POETRY REVIEW, Mr. Stephen Phillips, had something to say on this matter and was execrated for his sound criticism.

By the time he wrote *Daffodil Fields*, Mr. Masefield was so sure of his public as to throw aside all attempts to achieve distinction in verse. We have on successive pages lines which, had a schoolboy perpetrated them, would have been sufficient to stamp his work as hopeless—" Mercy of God, I die, I'm going to go " and " The sick man faintly answered ' I have got to go '." Farther on we have the expression " I have got to go " in two successive lines. This poem has nothing but the title and the interest of the narrative to redeem it from the commonplace. Its proper place is in a fiction magazine as a verse narrative and not in a volume of Poetical Works. This verdict applies with even more force to *Right Royal*, which descends to the jingle of the nursery rhyme. The heroine " Em " is surely the most artificial and futile heroine that ever intruded into the realms of poetry.

" But Love, all seeing, though painted blind,
Makes wisdom live in a woman's mind."

The sentiment is excellent, but we are faced with an anti-climax—Love's wisdom, in this woman's mind, can produce only such futility as

His love knew well from her own heart's bleeding
The word of help that her man was needing ;
And there she stood with her eyes most bright,
Ready to cheer her heart's delight.
*She said, " My darling, I feel so proud*
*To see you followed by all the crowd ;*
*And I shall be proud as I see you win."*

Comment here is surely unnecessary ! While such lines as

Just now in the park Sir Norman Cooking
Said " Harding, how well Right Royal's looking !
They've brought him on in the ring, they say."
John said, " Sir Norman, to-day's his day."
And Sir Norman said, " If I had a monkey
I'd put it on yours, he looks so spunky."

are not very far removed from my nursery recollections of

Mrs. Noah, she took the pail, and tried to milk the cow,
But she turned pale when it flicked its tail, for indeed she didn't know how.
And Shem and Japhet they tried to punt, exceedingly hard they tried,
One at the back and one at the front ; while the animals howled inside.

When Mr. Masefield marked down as his objective " The dirt and the dross, the dust and the scum of the earth " he set himself a task for which he is absolutely unfitted. His poem *A Consecration* is in form and in matter one of the best he has written. The intention which it expresses makes an instantaneous appeal. But when it comes to putting that intention into practice, it matters little whether his " tales be told " of " princes and prelates " or " of the maimed and the halt and the blind in the rain and the cold," for the one thing which Mr. Masefield cannot do, and will never be able to do, is to depict character.

Effective presentation of character depends both in prose and in verse on the possession of a sense of humour ; and in this Mr. Masefield is completely lacking. He is like a painter trying to paint a portrait with only half the proper range of colours. The result is that his portraits of men

and women, whether in the slums, in the public-house, on the race-course, or on the hunting field, are like pictures on the advertisement hoardings—a mass of crude, glaring, and superfluous details, the general effect of which is, like the hoarding picture, both unreal and inartistic. No one with any vestige of " the saving grace " could, for instance, have perpetrated the description of the parson's sporting wife in *Reynard the Fox*.

> She was a stout one, full of life,
> With red, quick, kindly, manly face,
> She held the knave, queen, king and ace,
> In every hand she played with men.
> She was no sister to the hen,
> But fierce and minded to be a queen.
> She wore a coat and skirt of green,
> A waistcoat cut of hunting red,
> Her tie-pin was a fox's head.

On reading this one cannot but realize the truth of Carlyle's dictum " Humour has justly been regarded as the finest perfection of genius. He who wants it, be his other gifts what they may, has only half a mind ; an eye for what is above him but not for what is about him and below him."

Mr. Masefield and his admirers would do well to remember that while a poet may write of sordid and commonplace things, yet that it is the function of all true poetry to raise every subject which it touches above the commonplace. Of the sordid, Shakespeare has done this time after time ; Browning has done it in writing of a mortuary, and of the corpses within it ; Oscar Wilde has done it in writing of a gaol and its inmates, and of the hangman and his work, and even of the corpse of a murderer ; Hood has done it of a suicide, and again of " poverty, hunger, and dirt," in *The Song of the Shirt*. But the poems of these writers are not commonplace ; whereas Mr. Masefield in his laboured efforts to write on unusual subjects—the public-house, the race-course, the navvy, the sailor—never rises above the commonplace. It is for this reason that his narrative poems (with the exception of *Dauber* and *The River*, which are redeemed by sea and ship imagery) are valueless as a contribution to the literature of our age.

R. Mc.DONALD

# RHYTHMS HEARD ON THE NILE

RHYTHM'S place in the realm of music and poetry has generally been accepted, but the theory that it is woven into the activities of the work-a-day world is not perhaps so universally recognized. Surely, it is like the marvellous pattern in a Persian carpet, and as in woof and weft there is a principle of proportion, so then in rhythm, it is argued, there must be some agreement of time and measure.

It is interesting to remember as one journeys up the Nile to the first cataract, and hears the continuous rhythm of the falling water, thundering over the great barrage to the accompaniment of the different sounds that float through the air, that a modern poet has caught some idea of this universal rhythm in these lines :

" The stars must make an awful noise
In whirling round the sky ;
Yet somehow I can't even hear
Their loudest song or sigh.

" So it is wonderful to think
One blackbird can outsing
The voice of all the swarming stars
On any day in spring."

Surely in no place has nature provided such wonderful beats and pulses as those heard on the Nile, which seem to pass from nature herself through the native life and habits of the people.

Who can watch the measured sway of the women as they go down to the edge of the river with their water cans, and returning, climb up the steep banks in single file with their pots poised on their heads, without feeling again that languorous throb, that lazy, pulsing beat of steady, rhythmic activity ? It is like the slow swing of a camel's walk.

And as the Nile glides along like a snake through the desert, from the bow of a boat one follows the measured movements of the fellah working his shaduf to irrigate his land ; or hears the steady splash of oars, as the native boatmen tack across the water to the changing breeze, singing their chanties of a forgotten age.

Perhaps this rhythmic pulse is also shown in the religious life of the people, as, regularly five times a day, the Muezzin ascends the winding stairs of his Minaret, and with a melodious voice, chants to the four winds of heaven, "Allah is great; I testify that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet. Come to prayer, come to worship; Allah is great." As this call to prayer is wafted along by the wind the Mohammedan spreads his carpet, and with this same agreement of measure and time systematically bows to worship his God.

How wonderful it is to gaze on the incomparable expression of the Sphinx! It was while approaching this marvel that the first rhythmic pattern presented to me an effective picture in sound. It came like an incantation over the desert, and as I drew nearer I saw the cause of my conjecture. Outlined against the sky, chanting their native songs, were men at work on excavations with sand-filled baskets held aloft on their shoulders, winding their way, with slow, swinging gait, around the pile of sun-baked sand, which covered the buried ruins of a temple of a vanished world.

But the spirit of to-day is shown even in ancient Egypt, for when the bell rang to cease work the baskets were thrown down, the singing stopped, and a great helter-skelter was made for home. As an after-dinner speaker recently remarked to the Egyptians at a public function in Cairo: "Even you are getting very modern and allowing the Sphinx to show more of her legs!"

An interesting halt was made to view the tombs near Beni-hassan. From the style of architecture the Proto-Doric and Lotus columns give evidence of early Greek ornamentation. Walking down a narrow pathway between an avenue of sugar canes, one is amused by the delightful crowd of yelling natives with their undisciplined donkeys, the vociferating owners demanding patronage of unwary customers. How inviting and comfortable looked the Sedan chairs placed between long poles devised by the ships crew for less venturesome travellers!

Surely nothing could be more picturesque than this cavalcade with graceful palm branches waved over the passengers silhouetted against the blue sky. And as the

procession passed along on the yellow sands, the swinging pace of the men was maintained by the following rhythmic refrain :

He la he la la Mohamad ra see la la la he,
He la la he he la la Mohamad, ra see la la.

If you would savour to the full the magnificent grandeur of an eastern sunset, stand for a few minutes on one of the Nile boats, and watch the great orb disappear behind the desert. The very heavens seem aflame with colours—vermilion, green, and orange ! As the brilliant shades blend into lovely soft tints, an intense peace and calm gradually descends over the land, but so potent it can almost be felt. To the right and left the Nile slides slowly between its ever-changing banks, and in the extreme distance one mentally visualizes the wonders of Karnak with its many ruined temples.

Between the distant trees coming ever nearer is a native musician with his Kemenagh, or coco-nut fiddle, made of half a shell over which skin is stretched. The strings are twisted horsehair, and are played with a bow. As the plaintive notes of the music float on the air, other natives slide between the trees and noiselessly squat near the players. Everything now is completely dominated by the moon as with eastern brilliance it brightens over the tall, dark palm trees, which stand out against the evening sky, making a perfect cameo of this vivid little scene, while the various rhythmic tunes are wafted across the water.

Surely in this land of wonder, while gazing up at the two gigantic colossi, it is easy to credit the story told by the Dragoman that one of these sings at early dawn ! It is not nearly so romantic to think that in the year 27 B.C. the great idol Memmon was broken by an earthquake, and that the mystery of the musical sounds is caused by the wind passing through the cracks, which so effectively produce the singing of his early morning Matins !

The journey from Assuan to Philæ with its Temple of Isis is full of interest, and one is struck by the contrast in type between the Soudanese and the Egyptians.

The question of transport has been easily solved along the great Nile Dam. To the extreme distance, a length of

one and a quarter miles, runs a miniature railway track, on which are small trolleys holding four passengers. It is a novel experience to be conveyed by two singing Soudanese developing their rhythmic swing into a furious pace! An occasional halt is made to gaze at the cataracts and rapids pounding their rhythmic thunder on the northern side, the brilliant sun creating glorious rainbows in the spray. A descent is made on foot where, by the edge of calm waters beneath the barrage, lies a strong boat; and then, making our way between the lesser rapids, we see stretching before us nothing but the endless waters of the Nile. Stroke by stroke, with measured precision the oars plunge into the water accompanied by the chanted songs of the men. To pass the time a native dances in a precarious position on a plank at the side of the boat to the beat of a tom-tom. The tom-tom looked easier to play than proved to be the case. The vigorous rhythms are sustained by two distinct beats, the pace being kept by one hand, and the halved beat made by the other, the sound thus produced being rather like the low boom of the deep pulse note of the Scottish bagpipes.

At last round a bend in the river far away in the distance rise the terraces of the Cataract Hotel, while opposite lies the leafy Elephantine Island, and, below, resembling a nest, reposes Kitchener's Island, crowned by encircling pigeons.

EDITH ELIZABETH CLEMENTS.

* * *

Particulars of The Poetry Society's lectureships, designed to promote a reasoned sense of values and sound poetic taste, may be obtained by schools and other institutions and organizations able to arrange for a series of lectures from the General Secretary of the Poetry Society, 16 Featherstone Buildings, London, E.C.1. Applications for the services of the Society's lecturers for the early part of 1928 should be made without delay, and also inquiries respecting Spring Examinations in Verse-Speaking in schools and provincial centres.

# THE DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY

## XV: JOHN HALL WHEELOCK; HARRIET MONROE; MRS. DWIGHT MORROW; A NATIONAL POETRY WEEK

MR. JOHN HALL WHEELOCK is the author of *The Human Fantasy*, *The Beloved Adventurer*, *Love and Liberation*, *Dust and Light*, and *The Black Panther* (reviewed in Volume XIV of *The Poetry Review*, in *The Dynamics of American Poetry*), and, lastly, *The Bright Doom* (Scribners). Inevitably, those who have been writing over a period of years are beginning to register some of the reactions to, what we speak of as Age, and Richter's words thereon come to the mind,

> " What makes old age so sad is not that our joys but that our hopes cease."

Mr. Wheelock is far from aged, having been born in 1882 in the environs of New York, on Long Island, graduating at Harvard in 1908, but the reports are coming in daily now in the new books of the older writers. Sara Teasdale's *Dark of The Moon* is a beautiful example of the breath of age reaching the poet.

Reading John Hall Wheelock's *The Bright Doom* brings also to the mind Shakespeare's lines,

> " O Sir, you are old; nature in you stands on the very verge of her confine; you should be ruled and led by some discretion that discerns your fate better than yourself." . . .

In *The Bright Doom* is expressed the longing to find such a one that rises again and again in the human heart. If it were only invariably true that " The evening of life brings with it its lamps " ! for truly " The mind that is anxious about the future is miserable." (Seneca.)

To speak quite sincerely there is perhaps more of the sense of doom than brightness in the volume . . . *with much beauty !*

The invocation on the first page carries proof of this, as do many other pages,

> " Spirit of Life,
> How great a lover of yourself you made
> In fashioning this spirit ! I have walked
> The earth in ecstasy and adoration.
> Live in me now—stretch out my heart, while here
> In one of your innumerable worlds
> I stand, and lift my face into the night."

*The Heart Grows Old*, follows

> " I have come back at last to the old home,
> After long days of absence. It was here

That in my burning youth I loved and sang,
And all that I have loved and lost is here;
And still the meadows and the woods are dear
And beautiful—though now to me that are
Less beautiful, less dear.

Earth and her dreams remain for ever young,
It is not beauty that grows old, but I:
The moon floods the pale cloud, and from the grass
The cricket sounds the endless song—but I
Am silent. Listen!—it is the owlet's cry.
O heart of mine, what distance have we come
Since last we heard that cry!

* * *

The everlasting song is still unsung
And the eternal tale is never told.
Earth and the ancient joy are ever young,
It is the heart that withers and grows old.

Perfect, is Solitudes

My heart is a dark forest where no voice is heard,
Nor sound of foot, by day or night—nor echo, borne
Down the long aisles and shadowy arches, of a horn,
Trembling—nor cry of beast, nor call of any bird.

But always through the deep solitudes a grieving wind
Moves like the voice of a vast prayer; it is your love
Lifting and bending leaf and bough—while, far above,
One thought soars like a hawk, in the heaven of my mind.

The Mask of Being

The fish-hawk over the water and the grey fish that goes
Glimmering through the water—the preyer and the prey—
They follow or hasten ever; they wrestle together, they close
In the old fearful fashion, in the old fierce way.

Harsh are the rites of being, and bitter is the war
Waged between life and life by the blind will-to-be;
Yet all if they but knew it, are one—lovers they are
Who strive, each with the other, in a great mystery.

Mr. Wheelock's philosophy of *Oneness* is embodied in the opening of his poem delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa So, Harvard Chapter, Cambridge, June 24th, 1927:

What word of courage may I bring to you,
What word of comfort—brothers and my friends—
Now the returning season gathers us
Into these folds and pastures of our youth,
Come for an hour of high communion here!
Frail and imperfect is the instrument,
And yet perhaps through me that Self may speak
Which is most wise, being woven of us all—
And through the generations still endures,
Shedding its generations like dead leaves,
One-self—the spirit of Man; for we are one.

For we are one, who are emprisoned here
Upon this turning planet as it swings
Through the lone waste and labyrinth of heaven—
One in our plight, one in our common doom.

* * *

Scanning the frontiers of the night for news;
Probing the atom; challenging the cell;
Knocking at every gate and every door
Of the inexorable silences;

* * *

'Mid iron cities or green solitudes,

* * *

Weaving the fabric of the world's desire;
Lying in prisons; sitting upon thrones;

* * *

And every heart-beat is an act of faith,
Praising the hidden Purpose!

Mr. Wheelock's very interesting letter in response to my query whether he would not like to say something to me of his book, we are giving here,

> "It contains most of the poetry that I have written since 1922 and includes, as you will notice, the poem which I delivered for the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard University, in June of this year. Like all my books, it is really one longer poem built up out of many diverse smaller units, and it develops, through these various parts, a few dominant ideas. One of the features of the book, perhaps, is the fact that it represents the groping of a modern and scientifically minded man for some sort of faith which can endure the white light of our modern knowledge. It is thus not an orthodox book, but, I believe, a religious one in the deeper sense of the word. The general tone of the book is positive—rather exceptional in a period when pessimism and doubt are the rule.

"Further than this I can only add, on the technical side, that many of the poems are written in loose rhythms, which have not heretofore been developed, and that quite a few poems employ metres which, to the best of my knowledge, have not yet been used.

"Roughly, I should say that the important thing about the book is that it is a book of affirmation, based not upon orthodox faith, but in spite of the tragic nature of life and the problems which seem no nearer solution than ever before."

(I was interested to read, some time after writing this second appreciation of Mr. Wheelock's work, an interview with Mr. Alfred Noyes on his departure on another American lecture tour, in which Mr, Noyes is reported as saying: "They are doing some extraordinary good work in America and producing first-rate poetry. But the men who are doing it are those whom America does not recognize, like J. Hall Wheelock, who wrote *Black Panther*. There is a lot of twaddle, too, and this is hailed as really great poetry." Mr. Noyes had spoken previously to me of his regard for Mr. Wheelock's work and urged that attention should be drawn to it.)

THE name of Harriet Monroe brings to all minds in the Poetry world the consideration of a conspicuous service to American poetry. Miss Monroe, through her love of poetry and a readiness and ability to recognize the rising possibilities in new and young and unknown pens, has led through these very definite gifts of hers and through the founding and editing of her magazine, *Poetry*, a Magazine of Verse, endowed from October, 1912, by over one hundred persons. She is the author of *Valeria and Other Poems*, 1892; *John Wellborn Root—A Memoir*, 1896; *The Passing Show*—modern plays in verse, 1903; *You and I*, poems, 1914; *The Difference and other Poems* (The Macmillan Co.), 1924; *Poets and Their Art* (Macmillan Co.), 1926; and compiler of *The New Poetry, an Anthology of 20th Century Verse*, 1917, enlarged, 1923.

Born in Chicago, she graduated at Visitation Academy, Georgetown, D.C., and developed in that great section of America opportunities for many young writers through her appreciation and recognition, that has evoked the gratitude of a wide area and now a widening circle—Miss Monroe, in 1920, was requested by the Committee on Ceremonies of the Chicago Exposition to write a poem for the dedication. Her *Columbian Ode* was read and sung at the ceremonies on the 400th Anniversary of the discovery of America. It is important and interesting to know Edwin Markham includes four of Miss Monroe's poems in

his *The Book of Poetry* (reviewed in THE POETRY REVIEW, May-June of last year).

Mr. Markham chooses *The Shadow Child*, *On the Porch*, *A Farewell*, and *Nancy Banks*. The last, a staccato appreciation of the mother of Lincoln, which ends with these two stanzas,

> To you at last
> Our praise, our tears,
> Love and a song
> Through the nation's years!
>
> Mother of Lincoln,
> Our tears, our praise;
> A battle-flag
> And the victor's bays.

and here follows *A Farewell*:

> Good-bye—no, do not grieve that it is over,
> The perfect hour;
> That the winged joy, sweet honey-loving rover,
> Flits from the flower.
>
> Grieve not—it is the law. Love will be flying—
> Oh, love and all.
> Glad was the living——blessed be the dying!
> Let the leaves fall.

So much has passed through the mind in these last thirty years, bridging as they do the greatest war in history, that it is not surprising to find this author emphasizing this fact in her title *Difference*. We will turn to the manner and optimism of the *Columbian Ode* included in this book:

> Columbia, on thy brow are dewy flowers
> Plucked from wide prairies and from mighty hills,
> To this proud day have led the steadfast hours.
> Now to thy hope the world its beaker fills.
> The old earth hears a song, sees rainbow gleams,
> And lifts her head from a deep couch of dreams.
>
> * * *
>
> Spain in the broidered robes of chivalry,
> Comes with slow foot and inward-brooding eyes.
>
> * * *
>
> And England, royal mother, whose right hand
> Moulds nations, whose white feet the ocean tread,

Lays down her sword upon thy shining strand
To bless the wreathed head :
Hearing in thine her voice, bidding thy soul
Fulfil her dream, the foremost at the goal.
And France who once thy fainting form upbore,
Brings beauty now where strength she brought of yore.
France the swift-footed, who with thee
Gazed in the eyes of Liberty,
And loved the dark no more.

* * *

Russia rides down from realms of sun and snow.
Germany casts afar
Her iron robes of war,
And strikes her harp with thy triumphal song.
Italy opens wide her epic scroll,
In bright hues blazoned, with great deeds writ long,
And bids thee win the kingdom of the soul.

* * *

Long have the dumb years passed with vacant eyes,
Bearing rich gifts for nations throned after,
Guarding thy soul inviolate as a star,
Leaving thee safe with God till man grows wide.

Contrast the fine assurance of these lines from the Ode with the ensuing modernism from *Difference* :

Well, here we are, Mother—
Atoms, electrons,
Afloat in this vast universe—
Going to town in a motor-car
Absurdly driven by exploding drops of oil :

* * *

Queer !
Born in Peking,
To grow up in Russia, perhaps,
And vote in Chicago,
And marry in Caracas !

* * *

How many hands,
In how many lands,
Have grown and harvested and transported and made
The dinner we shall nibble at daintily
Under the shaded candles !

* * *

I fear for the human spirit left alone
In vastness—
Alone with too much knowledge

That obliterates God,
Alone with too much power
That separates souls;

* * *

Will some seer and lover,
Lift this mess of a world—
This boiling cauldron—
From the ancient abominable fires,
And set it to cool in the winds of Time,
And mould it to beauty again,
And swing it high
To its path of joy
Sublime?

* * *

It might be done,
Little one!

*Poets and Their Art* is a book full of interesting and suggestive paragraphs; the following from tbe chapter entitled, "Science and Art," has a special significance for THE POETRY REVIEW:—

> The immense reach of modern causes and issues, the interdependence of all peoples of the earth, may well assure us that we live in a great age, an age which gives more scope than any in past history for the vision and conquest of great minds and the free action of little ones.
>
> * * *
>
> It is for the individual soul, now, as always before, in the history of the race, to master all this to see through the chaos of his time, and resolve it into forms of power and beauty.
>
> In other words, it is our job—the job of the poets, artists, scientists of our age—to mould the future of the world. The scientists are doing their part with sublime audacity—are the poets and other artists doing theirs?

## *A NATIONAL POETRY WEEK*

A UNIQUE development in the dynamic force of poetry in America was the establishment and carrying through of a "poetry week" nationally. Miss Anita Brown, the able Chairman of Poetry in New York State's Federation of Women's Clubs, has, at my request, given us the accompanying description of this far-reaching work:

The page of 1927 is turned with an innovation—the founding of Poetry Week; seven days set apart when all poets and poetry lovers rally round the maypole of poetic rhythm. The last week in May is the official time for this feast of the soul, an occasion when the essence of the three hundred and sixty-five days of wending one's way through

the various paths of poetry . . . old trails and new . . . is consolidated into a week of worship at the shrine of the great master minds, who are the invisible governors of the world. As Victor Hugo says, "Poets are seers."

The idea of Poetry Week was originated in America, though perhaps inspired by the cultural ancestry of the Old World. The first step forward in establishing the plan was through organized women's clubs, although it was heartily endorsed by leading poets and university professors. From the many letters received commending the plan, it was evident that Poetry Week was an essential and desired event, which the hearts of the people sought and recognized upon its presentation.

You ask the "who, why, and where" of Poetry Week?

It was inaugurated May 23rd to 29th, 1927, by the Chairman of the Poetry Division of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs, an organization representing a membership of 400,000.

The object of Poetry Week may be summed up in the following three aims: first, to develop further the appreciation of poetry; second, to inspire more to become poets; and third, to keep the standards high.

The prologue to Poetry Week was a radio programme broadcast by Dr. Robert Underwood Johnson, Director of the Hall of Fame, New York, and former Ambassador to Italy, who spoke on Poetry, followed by a reading from his own *Collected Poems*.

The inaugural programme was held in the gold and crystal setting of New Aeolian Hall, the prize-winning architectural structure on Fifth Avenue, New York, before a large and distinguished audience. The foremost poets of the day assembled and read from their books, forming, as it were, a great mosaic of thought that was as an invisible window in the cathedral of time.

During Poetry Week programmes were presented daily throughout New York City and State; radio programmes were also featured. States outside New York evidenced much interest in this epochal event and a desire to make it nationwide. An audience of over eleven hundred gathered in the large Wanamaker Auditorium at a special Club Women's Poetry Symposium. Poetry Week closed with Sunday evening poetry services in historic old St. Mark's, in the Bouwerie.

One of the unique features of the programmes was that poems of all nations were represented, some given in costume, such as *Afghani Poetry, Poems of the South, The Poetry of the American Indian* and also translations. For there is no nationality in the land of harmony, whether it be by word or note that the rhythmic sequence is woven. The poet takes the letters of the alphabet, strings them into words and winds them on the shuttle of thought; then, seeking the strands of some poetic form, as a loom, passes the shuttle back and forth weaving verse. The pattern may be history for the future or inspiration for the "now."

The Division of Poetry of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs is carrying out some distinctive features in its plan of procedure. A Reference Library is compiled in co-operation with the publishers, and is composed of the best books of poetry, available for any of the four hundred thousand members of the organization. A college girls' group has been formed to stimulate writing among the "younger generation." A Poetry Exhibit was part of the Annual Convention of Federated Clubs in November.

The Division of Poetry has an Active Committee and an Honorary Poetry Council, of which Lady Maud Warrender, your Honoured President, and Mrs. Alice Hunt Bartlett, Chairman of the American Section, are members, thus representing the English Poetry Society in New York State.

The result of Poetry Week has been the welding of a greater appreciation of Poetry, which is extending throughout the States, and 1928 forecasts the further fulfilment of the major plan, finding other States responsive to the idea throughout the South and West.

May not the distinguished English Poetry Society accept the plan of its English-speaking country across the waters and add another step onward in this round-the-globe processional during Poetry Week?

Why not join hands nationally and internationally, garlanding the world through the great symbol of Poetry, the fraternity whose membership extends through the ages, for . . .

> "Glimpses
> Of Life are as a thousand years, and Life
> Eternal, but their vast continuance."

*Poetry and Diplomacy:*

The appointment of Mr. Dwight W. Morrow as American Ambassador to Mexico has brought an additional poet to diplomatic circles. Mrs. Morrow, a lover and writer of poetry, became a patron of the Poetry Society on the founding of the American Section. Her genius is expressed in a great variety of subjects. Her broad sympathy is manifest in *Youth Passes* (Contemporary Verse):

> Youth passes: Michael, David, Joan, Lancelot;
> Age squinting at her shutter knows them not.
>
> "Your coat is thin against the winter cold."
> *A fleece of hope lines every shivering fold.*
>
> "You have no sword; can you fight beasts alone?"
> *I trust my good sling with its smooth white stone.*
>
> "A dry loaf stuffs that wallet by your side?"
> *Nay, nay, my bread is buttered thick with pride.*

" Darkness will snatch you with swift-fingered fear."
*Lend me no torch for all the stars shine clear.*

" Will you meet kings in poor, road-stained attire ? "
*My cap is feathered with an eagle's fire.*

Youth passes : Michael, David, Joan, Lancelot ;
Age squinting at her shutter knows them not.

*An Old Map* (Voices) has an original note among love poems :

How small and arrogantly safe the world
De Vinci loved and Polo knew !
Mothered by Mediterranean sands it curled
In lazy splendour where a Roman eagle flew.

So stood my heart, an empire of disdain,
Gibraltar, perched above smooth seas of blue,
Until horizons cracked in hurricane
Disclosed the continent of you.

In *New Calvary* (Voices) Mrs. Morrow relates the introspective beauty of the Fall with the thought of sacrifice :

These autumn flowers are ashen, beauty-bled ;
A brown shroud wraps the grass ; only a tree
On every bough burns sacrificial red
Remembering Calvary.

*Highroad* has great charm. She binds the revolving years with the world's highroads :

Sand of a desert made me first,
The young sphinx smiled my start,
By dying pilgrims I was nursed—
Hunger was my chart.

Sails of Phœnicia swept my breast
Daring a drunken wind ;
I am the brick the legions pressed—
Rome they left behind.

My belt of steel has bound the plains,
Hill to hill I link,
No height, no depth my hand restrains—
Distance is meat and drink.

Let no man doubt my grinding need,
When I have turned aside,
Though people prayed and kings decreed—
The fairest city died.

Significant of the barriers that friends may rear is *Wall*, which appeared in last May's *Harper's Magazine :*

My friend and I have built a wall
Between us thick and wide :
The stones of it are laid in scorn
And plastered high with pride.

We talk across the stubborn stones
So arrogantly tall—
Only we cannot touch our hands
Since we have built the wall.

Mexico's gain is our loss for the time being. It is hoped that Mrs. Morrow will give us poetic interpretations of the colourful, ancient land of the Aztec.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

Armistice Day, N.Y., 1927.

## THE AMERICAN PAMPHLET POETS

AT a time when most inexpensive paper-covered books in America wore such inviting titles as *Brooklyn Bob Bulge* or *Dodger Dot's Diamond Snap*—the story of the *Willy-Wally Wipe-out*—England was offering under the same jackets much of the most inspired of European prose. These books were " kept moving," as the publishers say. They developed or exposed a wide reading area of persons who could afford only a bit beyond actual living expenses, but who wanted that bit to be of good quality. A high type of literature became a common experience to many impecunious people. What was the taste and appetite at that time in America is but slightly known. It was satisfied only through the Public Libraries. They offered a temporary pleasure in a book, not possession. " Rush seats " to good music, free days at art museums, books loaned in public libraries—held nothing permanently tangible for people of tastes for beauty. English and Continental readers were even then able to *possess* some of the best writings.

So much for prose ! More recently Ernest Benn, Ltd., has issued the *Augustan Books of Modern Poetry*. They comprise poems chosen from the best among Mid-Victorian or Modern poets. How universally these are appreciated, I do not know. I do know that there is a growing demand for them here in America and that the idea has instigated the publishing of American Pamphlet Poets. The Stokes

Company display the *Augustan Poets* wherever Simon and Schuster display the *Pamphlet Poets*. It is an inspired arrangement. Our *Pamphlet Poets* include Mid-Victorians, Moderns, a Child Poet, four Negro Poets, and the "New York Wits." They reveal the wisdom of Dr. Hughes Mearns, General Editor, and John Erskine, Louis Untermeyer, Laurence Jordan, and Joseph Anthony. They show our most gifted and indigenous writers at their intrinsic best. In one or two cases the writer appears to far more advantage than in his completely assembled works.

The idea is yet young, but has penetrated farther than originally foreseen. An act of poetry-sincerity has come home to various-minded friends—students in schools and colleges, the bookstore transient, the reading addict and the traveller. The *Pamphlet Poets* have found out persons who have been cloyed and bewildered by the uneven quality of most anthologies or collected volumes. They satisfy his want of a very little bit of fine quality. The very finest poetry looses flavour if taken too liberally.

Any quotation from any of the pamphlets displays the editorial taste. Here is Carl Sandburg; his pulse beats in every word of *Upstream*:

> The strong men keep coming on.
> They go down shot, hanged, sick, broken,
> broken.
> They live on fighting, singing,
> lucky as plungers.
> The strong mothers pulling them on,
> on. . . .
> The strong mothers pulling them
> from a dark sea, a great prairie,
> a long mountain.
> Call hallellujah, call amen, call
> deep thanks.
> The strong men keep coming on.

Elinor Wylie, whose lines "carry a strange impersonal excitement," as in *Wild Peaches*:

> Down to the Puritan marrow of my bones
> There's something in this richness that I hate.
> I love the look, austere, immaculate,
> Of landscapes drawn in pearly monotones.
> There's something in my very blood that owns
> Bare hills, cold silver on a sky of slate,
> A thread of water, churned to milky spate,
> Streaming through slanted pastures fenced with stones.

I love those skies, thin blue or snowy grey,
Those fields, sparse-planted rendering meager sheaves;
That spring, briefer than apple-blossom's breath,
Summer, so much too beautiful to stay,
Swift autumn, like a bonfire of leaves,
And sleepy winter, like the sleep of death.

The four negro poets—Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes—convey such a tang of wild beauty that it is hard deliberately to choose but one quotation: L. Hughes's *Dream Variation*:

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the bright day is done,
Then rest at cool evening
Beside a tall tree
While night comes gently
Dark like me.
That is my dream.
To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun.
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening,
A tall, slim tree,
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

If I just write

"Once a pallid vestal
Doubted truth in blue;
Listed red as ruin,
Harried every hue";

Nathalia Crane has introduced her charming, fresh vigour of line and thought.

Edna St. Vincent Millay is at her characteristic best in folk-poetry or lyrics, as in *Portrait, by a Neighbour*:

Before she has her floor swept
Or her dishes done,
Any day you'll find her
A-sunning in the sun!

It's long after midnight
Her key's in the lock,
And you never see her chimney smoke
Till past ten o'clock!

She digs in her garden
With a shovel and a spoon,
She weeds her lazy lettuce
By the light of the moon.

She walks up the garden
Like a woman in a dream,
She forgets she borrowed butter
And pays you back cream!

Her lawn looks like a meadow,
And if she mows the place
She leaves the clover standing
And the Queen Anne's lace!

Every time I copy the exclamation marks I feel the "folk" in her folk-poetry. Then comes the final water-sound in *Exiled:*

I should be happy, that am happy
Never at all since I came here.
I am too long away from water.
I have a need of water near.

*Two* quotations! My lack of restraint shows it is more natural to have enthusiasms about a given poet when offered with his consummate best.

H. HARTNESS FLANDERS.

## A DISTINGUISHED LONG POEM

### Prometheus Surveys Piccadilly

THERE is a number of so-called tendencies in the development of modern poetry, and, unfortunately, too many of the examples of present day verse remain in the stage of showing a tendency; they do not stand, as it were, upon both feet, strongly and resolutely, but upon one foot, transitionally. The freak verse is not here in question; that, at best—or worst—is a minor epidemic and the patients need not be unduly cosseted by criticism. But in the decade, now nearing its completion, since the War, the attempts upon the larger lines of inspiration have been few and not always distinguished; the long poem has been considered, very mistakenly, a conservative throwback to the bad old times of the Victorians, and the poets who have joined issue with great themes, rather than with the trivial recording of erotic impulses, have usually had to pay dearly for their courage: the modern iconoclasts, fresh from the Oxford Union or the Cambridge Debating Society, have sat upon the head of the great tradition and have tried to keep it down. But they have

not succeeded, and the deep voice of the authentic Muse has been heard more than once. Let us remember at least two examples of the larger music: Sir William Watson's *The Superhuman Antagonists*, and Alfred Noyes' *The Torchbearers*.

With the publication of the new poem by Wallace B. Nichols, *Prometheus in Piccadilly* (Ward, Lock and Co., Ltd., 6s.) another such example has been given us—one as remarkable as any and perhaps more original than most. It is intensely modern, and Mr. Nichols has succeeded in achieving the aim which he enunciates in his preface, "that of blending the classical mythology, so full of suggestive symbolism, with the realities of modern life."

The story of this poem—for it contains a story, and, moreover, an interesting and dramatic one—is that Prometheus, the fabled maker of Man, is unbound in the present year and finds himself at Piccadilly Circus. Through the length of a whole day he watches the panorama of life in all its variety, ranging through the full gamut of disillusion, but finally being reconciled to his old enemy, God, in a resplendent harmony, with renewed hope in his heart for his creation.

This theme is of immense scope, and Mr. Nichols has wisely treated it in a very varied manner, breaking it up into separate sections, constantly changing the metre and uniting the epic, dramatic, and lyric forms with a broad, controlling skill. The character drawing is firm and free, from the Mephistophelean figure of Adam Mann, the down-at-heel Oxford graduate, to Lil the flowergirl, while Prometheus himself is presented with deep insight; the gradual change in his outlook, from revengefulness, through astonishment, disillusion, and pity to spiritual humility and re-birth, is both dramatically magnificent and symbolically subtle.

The poem has three principal facets: its realism, its sheer poetry, and its underlying philosophy. We doubt if realism in poetry, that is to say, realism which still remains poetry, has ever been more dramatically attained, even by Mr. Masefield. It is completely modern, yet restrained, and Old Moll and Tilly Wilks, the Piccadilly flower-women, and Black Ned, the match-seller and beggar, are vividly true to life, yet remain fit figures for a poem. They may speak in blank verse, but the blank verse they speak is natural to their type. Complemental to such episodes in which they appear are the more specifically poetical passages in which Prometheus speaks or—as in the case of the sixteen stasimons, or lyrical interludes—the poet himself. These, if we mistake not, are upon the highest level of modern

achievement. We can only leave them to the enjoyment of the reader and recommend them to the discernment of the anthologist.

The third facet of *Prometheus in Piccadilly*, that of its philosophy, is one not easy to assess in a brief compass, for the shuttles of its thought move so continually backward and forward through the linked episodes of the poem that it is difficult to reduce that thought to its simplest essentials. But, unless we have read Mr. Nichols wrongly, we think that the keynote to the exposition lies in the line : " Rebellion has no beauty, only pride," a thesis which is developed with rare resources of rhythm and imagery in the whole of the part entitled " The Triumph of God "—a message that should not be without efficacy in the present state of the world. We would like also to draw the thoughtful reader's attention to the fifth and thirteenth stasimons, devoted respectively to the evolution and socialization of man ; and then—if he will bear in mind the while the ancient legend of Prometheus—the following lines in the section in Part II, headed " A Halt of Fate" :

" Unto this end the seed of fire
Was stolen, that the theft be likewise gift,
Yet only gift when theft be found in vain."

We are of the opinion that this distinguished work should prove satisfying to all lovers of true poetry.

MARGUERITE FIELDS.

SOME INDIVIDUAL VOLUMES.

In *The Pyramid* (Cobden-Sanderson, 5s.) Mr. Sherard Vines ignores most of the conventions of serious verse and often the bare rules of grammatical construction, yet by the sheer vigour of his imaginative power he compels us to listen to his marvellous tangle of ideas and sentences. His vocabulary is an extensive and an unusual one. One wishes that he did not exploit it less curiously at times . . . also that he considered appropriate stops worthy of a place in literature. The quotations that follow are both taken from the title poem :

In time a rending pause.
Horus was threatened ; insect claws
And fasting tentacles laid hold
The scarlet coat, the drawers of gold,
The hat, one sapphire and one sky
In puffs of darkness blew the dry
And drifted fragments of eclipse.

* * *

Cranes and pulleys rise
joyfully from the Easter sepulchre.
Nets of wire diaper
paschal skies
whose lamb-like clouds drop fatness on the land
these trailing clouds of fatness, holy oil
from bronze bull angels' beards, that quite obscure
the moon, death's fluttering hand
that plucks at bedclothes.

Mr. T. Bouch disarms his readers and critics by his title and prefaces to *Sentimentalities* (Duckworth, 5s.). Though his verse only occasionally rises to excellence, it is all pleasant reading, chiefly because both his originality and his sentimentality are properly checked by restraint . . . perhaps too much so occasionally, for his slips into colloquialism remain such and are not bold enough to add spice to his words. I mean such phrases as, " we'll greet and just pass on," and, " I cannot help going on loving you." But in such lines as—

Stealthily at first thou comest, like the tides of the sea, when they turn secretly to the shore.
And shyly as it were a boy ; when the tides of love first move in his inmost core.
We have seen thy handiwork in the morning : we have traced the print of thy fingers all along the east.
We have watched thee build up the arched domes of noon ; and frescoeing the dusk when day has ceased.

from *A Psalm to Light*, are very musical and quite unstereotyped.

The *Poems* of B. P. Allinson (Matthews) are more uniformly good. The sonnet called *The Somme Battlefield* is particularly successful in its retrospection and appeal—

The spears of spring have triumphed over death
And stabbed their pennants through the shell-pocked clay,
The trumpets of the wind have swept the breath
Of war ; the sun has flushed the brow of day ;
Now there are poppy vales to couch a lover
On rich fustian, dandelion down
Full feathered, silver may-weed blooms that cover
Spring's young republic with the royal crown ;
But when at night the moon-embroidered clouds
Mantle the high-star-main, when colour dies
And shape is mutable, then from the crowds
Of dead beneath these tragic weeds there rise
Rumours of pain and sobs that have no state . . .
Then and again the land grows desolate.

The dedicatory poems of Edith Burrows' *Sonnets for Petrova* (Four Seas, $2.00) are, besides their obvious sincerity, effective tributes to the object of inspiration. The other poems in the volume, which are earlier work, serve to show that the author has made decided progress in prosody.

Mr. F. R. Higgin's book of poems, *The Dark Breed* (Macmillan, 3s. 6d.) is full of Irish flavour and fancy. One can appreciate the lyricism even if one cannot comprehend the allusions to Irish folk lore. The last verse of *Hermits* is typical of the author's style—

O would we could land on that island
And gather its calm
Into our wild hearts in a twilight
Of candle and psalm;
Watching the ebb of cold waters . . .
And with a new flood,
The salt of your shining beauty
Stinging my blood!
Then what if cold Death is growing
Deep in each bone,
Love cannot end with two ashes
Under one stone.

The appropriateness of humour in poetry has been much discussed a[illegible]y. Given that it is of the right sort, of a delicate, whimsical quality, and not the crude stuff that some verse is vexed with, it is always wholesome seasoning. Of this whimsical kind is the humour in *China Cats* by Miss Kathleen Conyngham Greene (Philip Allan, 1s.). Incidentally, there is a great deal more than humour in these delightful rhymes, and many of us would like to have seen *Little Ghosts* included in the recently published *Anthology for Animal Lovers*.

Among the many mansions of the City
That will have room for all,
The Master Builder's added, in His pity,
Kennel and bech and stall.

There will be one among the Lords of Heaven
To draw beneath His wings,
Behind the sounding harps and candles seven,
All furred and feathered things.

And there the little ghosts that trot behind us,
Untiring, from the past,
May at some golden, glittering corner find us,
And know it Heaven at last.

E. D. BANGAY.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The latest volume of poems by the Hon. Evan Morgan, "Lord Tredegar's poet son," has been published in the United States by Brentano's as well as in this country by Messrs. Kegan Paul. This extension of his public is no doubt due to the introduction by Mr. Alfred Noyes, who has done Mr. Morgan a better service than his earlier introducers, perhaps because the poem on which Mr. Noyes bases his claim for attention for his protégé does deserve consideration from a wider public than a circle of admiring friends. *The Eel* certainly places Mr. Morgan above the ranks of poetastry, although we doubt whether it would have been written except for the influence of the fish poem by Rupert Brooke. In it, however, Mr. Morgan has emerged definitely from the obscure medley of mysticism and symbolism, chained to a persistent vein of materialism and frivolity, which makes the rest of his work appear to be that of a spirit in prison. Brentano's also send out an American edition of Wilfred Roland Childe's *Ivory Palaces*, which may be taken as a companion to Mr. Morgan's volume, with its atmosphere of mysticism and religious feeling. Mr. Childe, however, is a more polished poet with, perhaps, less individuality. We have had occasion to recognize the beauty of his work in the *Gothic Rose*. *Ivory Palaces* does not reach the former high level. Like so much ambitious modern work these poems leave one with a feeling that there is something lacking and that they are intended for private consumption rather than for the stranger—an effect which the author himself strengthens by addressing many of the poems to various individuals. We do not know who John Donovan is or Fred Lawson, and we do resent being offered the *Ballad of God and the Three Kings* and *Arcady* for our appreciation and delight with these individual names attached to them. We would prefer to think that these poems were written for us, otherwise, why are they offered to the public? The only instance in which we can find this affectation is justified is in the beautiful, affectionate tribute to the County of York, his very self-contained and distinctive Motherland, which is written "For my Mother."

*Dale Folk* (Bodley Head, 10s. 6d.) is another intimate book associated with the great county of industry and legend, and all who love the strong-charactered Ridings must be grateful to Mrs. Charles Ratcliffe for her continued devotion to them, and for the skill with which she seizes upon the characteristic outlook and speech of the Dale Folk.

But they would wish that she would adopt some more definite scheme in these volumes and write us the chronicles of a Yorkshire year and of the " Dales of Arcady " from whence the folk speech and folk songs and folk customs are disappearing into the limbo of neglected, discarded, forgotten things, whose ghosts continue to haunt the few of us who have come under their influence or been brought up among them. A great work awaits Mrs. Ratcliffe if she would only recognize her opportunity and develop from apprenticeship into full exercise of her literary powers, observation, and insight. This present volume is largely made up of very short prose sketches without any particular co-relation except that they do relate to Dale Folk, and the poems that are interspersed are chiefly in dialect of the nature of the affecting *Shepherd's Funeral* which appeared recently in THE POETRY REVIEW. Apropos, Mrs. Ratcliffe has published recently a collection of the leading contributors over a series of years to her quarterly magazine, *The Microcosm*. Many eminent names are represented in prose and verse and pictures, but, again, our complaint is that it is too much a miscellany, too much a record of the editor's large circle of literary and artistic friends, and too indefinite, therefore, in content. We would have liked this handsome volume much more if it had been a Yorkshire miscellany.

Very far removed from the vague and frivolous are the very expressive, individual poems descriptive of Western American life in *Paintrock Road* by Edwin Ford Piper (Macmillan, 6s. 6d.). Mr. Piper evidently knows the strenuous life of the ranges, which he handles with vigour and restraint in lyric and narrative poems, and that he is able to touch his many open-air subjects with the magic of poetry is shown by the short *Trail-Talk :*

> The hunter in forbidden land,
> When darkness fell,
> Won the wood-folk promise
> They would never tell :
>
> He silenced leg and belly and wing,
> The new leaf and the old ;
> Forgot to caution ashes—
> Ashes told.

Arthur Hood, deeply versed in Blake, should have based a centenary appreciation upon the " unlimited " edition of Blake's writings edited by Mr. Geoffrey Keynes and published by the Nonsuch Press—a beautifully printed, buckram-bound book of above eleven hundred

pages, which is more important for the general reader, because of its completeness, authority, and compactness, than its erudite editor's annotated variant three-volume edition issued by the same press. Here is a worthy monument to the growing reputation and influence of the poet, mystic, and philosopher, who is profoundly affecting this generation—how profoundly Dr. J. H. Clarke attempts to show in his monograph, *William Blake on The Lord's Prayer* (The Hermes Press, popular edition, 5s.), in which the author, who came under the powerful influence of *The Everlasting Gospel* above thirty years ago, deals with the essence of the message which Blake completed on his death-bed—his setting of the Lord's Prayer. Somewhat after his particular centenary celebrations Dante is presented in a new translation by the late David James Mackenzie, who for many years was a judge in Glasgow (Longmans, 12s. 6d.). Here, again, we have the poet pure and simple, without notes or comment—a vivid version of the great poems by a scholar and a poet able to handle a metre and a scheme of rhymes closely corresponding to those of the original. He offers his work to Dante scholars—we hope it will reach the ordinary reader concerned with the beauty and significance of poetry as expressed by the immortal Italian.

A late arrival among the children's books is *By the Nursery Fire* by Irving Bell, with some delightful illustrations by Poppy Irving Bell (Arden Press, boards, 2s. 6d.). As Miss Wilhelmina Stitch aptly says in a foreword, " Small ears love the music of words that jingle merrily and flow sweetly," and we agree with her that " the author has succeeded in combining the fascination of rhyme with the lure of a story —an ideal blend for nursery tea." In another similarly beautifully printed and more ambitious volume from the same press Mrs. Irving Bell offers a series of wise, encouraging, lilting verses. The Viscountess Curzon supplies an interesting personal note as a foreword, in which she says, " Poetry, to my mind, should have certain practical virtues. It should serve to hearten those who read it, and give them a lightening of the spirit towards everyday life. Much of the poetry that is written these days induces a feeling of almost barbaric moodiness that is destructive to one's piece of mind. Occasionally, however, a volume of verse that is cheerful, helpful, and at the same time stirring to the emotions, appears. The verses included in this volume are of that calibre. Mrs. Irving Bell has touched many chords which will find a sympathetic appreciation on the part of those who appreciate the qualities of courage, pity for the unfortunate, and love of beauty and right-doing." Lady Curzon's commendation is equally deserved

by the delicate, rhythmical verse in *Christmas* by E.M.S. (Stockwell, 1s. 6d.—which should not be printed on the board binding). We like particularly the simple blank verse narrative of Medred, the old shepherd of Bethlehem who in 65 A.D. is satisfied that through the doctor Luke " my story shall be kept secure—a shepherd's heritage adown the years."

We think that less than 6s. might have been charged for the fantastically written and printed conceits that make up Mr. Humbert Wolfe's *Kensington Gardens* (Benn). Take *Lupin* for an example:

Said the old deaf gardener,
" I'm worn out with stoopin'
over them impident
sword-blue lupin.

" Look at 'em standing,
,as cool as kings,
and me sopped to the middle
with bedding the things."

What have Mr. Garvin and *The Observer* to say about it?

It is pleasant and useful to have such a long needed volume of *Selections from Swinburne* as Mr. H. M. Burton has now provided (Cambridge University Press, 3s. 6d.). In venturing to read Swinburne in girls' schools and elsewhere we have had to carry round the country Heinemann's heavy complete edition, with its embarrassments of choice and risk of plunging into something not suitable for the occasion when the markers come out and the proper pages—and poems—cannot be found in a hurry. Here we have a handy volume, representing the varied and inconsistent quality of Swinburne's genius with sufficient splendid poems to satisfy the ordinary occasion. A balanced introduction ends with this conclusion, " He founded no school, but he left an unmistakeable mark on our poetic literature. He found it stereotyped and formal; he left it plastic and infinitely variable. On the dull and decent background of Victorian modesty he imposed a brilliant and kaleidoscopic network of colour and design. English poetry is still mainly lyrical, still singing in the tones and accents he taught it."

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

MR. ARTHUR HOOD in the last number of THE POETRY REVIEW having termed my taste " astonishing," and Miss Mackillop Brown in the same issue having rebuked me for an attack on Francis Thompson, I will, if I am permitted, provoke the fray at once to its acutest stage, as the opportunity may not arise again.

I will say, at the outset, that there is to me only one poet whose

style is perfect—Sir Walter Scott. Secondly, he is the only poet in English who is at all like Homer in spirit. Thirdly, he is the only poet whom I should greet as a friend and at once know how to entertain. If the readers of THE POETRY REVIEW care to have patience, I will explain the whole matter, and have done with it.

I will dismiss the question of Homer first, because it is the shortest. The *Lay of the Last Minstrel* is—to me—the only poem at all Homeric in spirit. It is concerned with a feud which is the breath of life to the poet. It concerns his ancestry, his name, himself. It is fought on land familiar to him from his infancy, his home. And it is, as Matthew Arnold has said Homer is, " noble " and " swift " and " plain."

The description of Melrose Abbey is my favourite passage in poetry. Mr. Hood is mistaken. I speak with no authority whatever. I simply like it best. And it is nobly religious. Francis Thompson, beside Scott, is morbid. When a man has said of the Bible,

> " Within that awful volume lies
> The mystery of mysteries," [1]

he has said all that need be said about religion in secular poetry.

Secondly, Scott's style is perfect.

> " Toils with the rocks the roaring linn——"

that is to me a perfect line. But if anyone disagrees, he may. It is a matter of taste; and I shall pay no attention to him. Again, the description of the chase in the first canto of the *Lady of the Lake* contains passages that are perfect.

> " Faint and more faint, its failing din
> Return'd from cavern, cliff, and linn,
> And silence settled, wide and still,
> On the lone wood and mighty hill."

Again, the lines

> " For jaded now, and spent with toil,
> Emboss'd with foam, and dark with soil,
> While every gasp with sobs he drew,
> The labouring stag strain'd full in view,"

are perfect. Perfect also is the passage,

> " There, while close couch'd, the thicket shed
> Cold dews and wild-flowers on his head,
> He heard the baffled dogs in vain
> Rave through the hollow pass amain,
> Chiding the rocks that yell'd again."

[1] These lines actually occur in the " Monastery "; but the scene is laid near Melrose.

Lastly, the lines,

> " The western waves of ebbing day
> Roll'd o'er the glen their level way ;
> Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
> Was bathed in floods of living fire,"

are the height of poetic achievement, culminating in the unsurpassed, " Its thunder-splinter'd pinnacle "—which I dare say is Aeschylean, but I did not speak Greek from infancy.

It is well-known that Scott rode from the banks of Loch Vennachar to Stirling Castle to see if the distance could be traversed in the time mentioned in the poem. It is well known, also, that Rossetti composed writhing on a sofa. But Scott rode or farmed. In other words, he was fit, whereas Rossetti was not fit.

As to entertaining Scott, if he came to see me in Pennington, near Ulverston, I would take him where I always go myself in the afternoon —that is, on to the top of Kirkby Moor. And when I got just below the Pennington reservoir, I would stop, as I always do stop, and gaze with admiration at a gate with " Buccleuch " printed on it in letters of gold. Then I always believe that Sir Walter Scott would stopd an gaze at this gate, lost in admiration at the letters, as I myself always am. It is the only gate known to me in Pennington with " Buccleuch " on it, though there are others on the way to Ireleth. After that, we should look away to Barrow, where the Buccleuch dock is. And on our right would be Slate Pencil Lane, whence it is said that the Duke of Buccleuch can ride on his own land all the way to Low Furness. I was told this when a child ; and I have always lived in the Scott country. Therefore go to meet him on Kirkby Moor, as St. Ives met the " Shirra." He is always to be found there, amid the perfect heather—a magnificent and all-triumphant friend. That is why his style is perfect. *De gustibus non disputandum.*

T. E. CASSON.

* * *

Members of The Poetry Society (and postal subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW) are asked to remit outstanding subscriptions or to renew when due for 1928 without further notice. Attention to this little detail would greatly facilitate the work of the General Secretary. The annual subscription (10s.) is actually so very small and has to cover so many things and so much work—on economic grounds it should be at least double the present amount—that it should not be necessary for several reminders to be sent before payment is made. New members and subscribers for 1928 would be welcomed.

## *AN ESSAY IN CRITICISM:*

### ADVICE TO A NEGRO ON WRITING A SONNET

Dear Percy Bysshe Shelley Coker—For an African of seventeen, handicapped by the weakness of using a language which is only artificially his own—I repeat what I have said of former efforts from your pen—you improve! My greatest difficulty is to get at the back of your mind. Not always do I seem to grasp your meaning.

The charm of true Poetry is its simplicity. A child may appreciate, even when it does not fully understand, Beauty. When William Blake wrote:

> "A robin redbreast in a cage
> Puts all heaven in a rage,"

he was indulging, maybe, in metaphorical exuberance. Yet how instant is the heart's response to that epitome of serfdom!

When he addressed the tiger in these words:

> "Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
> In the forest of the night,
> What immortal hand or eye
> Could frame thy fearful symmetry?"

he applied to the beautiful coat of a wild beast an epithet (*burning*) that makes the whole picture leap to the mind—the density of the tropical forest, the mystery of the hot, dark night, and that "invisible menace" which remains part of Nature's vast scheme of the survival of the strong.

In the same poem Blake created a couplet which stands side by side with Keats's "Magic casements opening on the foam. . . ."—a comparison of the stars to warriors:

> When the stars threw down their spears
> And watered heaven with their tears.

Only Genius can achieve these miracles.

Descriptions of that kind impress the mind with an atmosphere of *Faery* as old as humanity itself. This sense of the mysterious will maintain, we may be sure, until the heavens (in Dickens's fine phrase) are rolled up like a scroll. It is the element of strangeness without which, Bacon has so earnestly told us, there can be no lasting Beauty.

And now, Percy, let me print your poem exactly as you sent it to me:

### NATURE'S ARTS

> The rolling clouds, the pledge of years,
> The proudest fields, the loving tide,

The minute worm, the *rôle* of tears
Are Nature's Arts and earthly pride.

The wrinkled age, the baby's ears,
The desert shore, the oceans wide,
The germ of life, the thrilling fears
Are Nature's plans in mysteries tied.

The man in the moon, the morning light,
The lonely toad in the farthest pools,
The blackest Nigger, the moaning night
Are plied by Nature's wits and tools.

The peacock's gown, the petals bright,
The trodden leaf, the wind that cools,
The deep-sea fish, the forest fright
Are Nature's Arts and Nature's Rules.

I read your lyric, Percy, half-a-dozen times before there emerged even a nebular coherence. For there is a seeming antagonism in many of the examples given.

Once more you must be warned that the epithets used in verse ought always to have a defensible relationship with the qualities they describe. I have shown you that the adjective *burning*, applied to a hidden beast of prey by William Blake, results in a most glowing picture of the Tiger. But, as a description of the tide, *loving* will never do! It is about the last word in the dictionary to be used in such a connection.

And why bring a baby's ears into proximity with the desert shore? Or make the deep-sea fish a neighbour of the wind?

Wherefore, also, the *arrière pensée* that compelled you—I use the word "compelled" advisedly!—to animadvert upon "the blackest Nigger"; while in the same stanza you refer to "the man in the moon"? Is it that Superstition and age-old Resentment still go hand in hand (no doubt only subconsciously) in the nature of the African?

You refer also to the peacock's "gown." Generally, it is the peacock's tail that is lauded, the rest of its body not being held in poetic esteem. But the peacock's gown *is* very beautiful; and I thank you for the reminder of the truth.

While I admire "the trodden leaf," I cannot subscribe to "the forest fright." I should be glad to learn what the latter may be?

Your rhyme scheme is monotonous. It leads me to suppose that you had a form of sonnet at the back of your mind. You play on only three rhymes, when you had afforded by the sixteen lines graceful opportunity for eight.

Suppose I put your central idea into sonnet form, and make these random thoughts as coherent as my own mind will permit? You will observe that the syllables of each line have to be increased from eight to ten. Your own rhymes will be maintained as far as possible.

Nor need I, perhaps, repeat that the perfect sonnet consists of fourteen decasyllabic lines: the first eight being the octave—which should have no more than two rhymes, used thus: A, B; B, A; A, B; B, A;—and the last six lines being the sestet. The sestet may contain either two or three rhymes, blended according to the taste of the craftsman.

In sense, moreover, a really good sonnet should bear its meaning on the advancing wave of the octave; and then swing it backward (after leaving behind a deposit of Beauty and Wisdom) in a musical sestet.

Here, then, is the sonnet based upon your thoughts—

NATURE'S ARTS

The clouds, high-poised in stately pomp and pride
  O'er rolling fields that pledge ungarnered years,
  Or stilled on lonely shores where human ears
Have never heard the slow, incoming tide—
These are God's messengers o'er oceans wide!
  From their far skyey homes, by smiles and tears,
  They charm to wakefulness man's hopes and fears,
Revealing secrets Life had else denied!

Take heed, my heart! We are but Nature's tools,
  All things being wrought to her enduring plan:
From humblest toads that haunt the loneliest pools,
Down-trodden leaves, waiting a wind that cools,
  Deepest-sea fish, to star no eye may scan:
  All things are Nature's Art, whose crown is—Man!

Now, Percy, I do not send you this sonnet in the belief that it is flawless. Were it not that I am bound by your own literary content I might have allowed my fancy freer rein. But there, as clearly as simple words can express it, seems to be what you tried to say; and did not, because you have not yet sufficiently mastered the English tongue.

Perhaps you will go on trying? Joseph Conrad, esteemed to-day as a master of English prose, was a Pole. At your age, he could not speak our language. Someday, with perseverance, you may achieve one of those precious jewels of thought, "five words long," that are prized so highly by Humanity—prized because they lend the heart and mind "the imperishable rapture of a dream."

Onitsha, Southern Nigeria. J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

## A CALLING

WINGS of the Winds of the North,
have you kissed as you stooped in your roaming,
Tresses more soft than the floss
that you gathered on thistle-clad leas?
Eyes that were peaceful and clear
like the first stars that shine in the gloaming,
Shoulders and throat that outgleamed
the foam-flowers of the harvestless seas?

Was there somewhere a breath that was sweet
as the scent of the incense of roses
Moulded in musics of words
like the trillings of brooks in the dell,
Lips that were moist with a nectar
more rare than the bee's store encloses,
Cheeks overveiled with the dust
of the lily's inviolate cell?

Did you pass in your journeyings me-ward
as you wandered o'er meadows and mountains,
Steps that went lightsome and swift
as the delicate steps of the doe?
Dainty as doves that alight
on the sills of marmorean fountains,
Under the bowers where the trumps
of the purple convolvulus blow.

Turn thee; Oh turn and be swift
on the ways where my love's feet are faring.
This be thy clue: where the first
stars of Spring are awake in the grass;
There where the copses are gauzed
with new green and the swallows are pairing,
Ask the young corn has it seen her,
the gossiping rills, did she pass?

Lade thee with pillage of spices
and perfumes of breeze-balming islands,
And carols of opaline oceans
apulse with mysterious swells,
And scents of the numberless blooms
that enhoney the slumberous silence
In odorous woods where the airs
of the South weave their murmurous spells.

Take of the fervours and fragrance
of ceaseless and seasonless growing,
Luxurious colours and contours
from gardens of orchid and palm,
Ardours of smouldering buds
that repine for the time of their blowing,
Syrups of manifold cups
that brim with unnameable balm.

Come to her, cling to her, close her
around with uncounted caresses,
And spice of invisible thuribles
stored with remembrance of flowers,
Mix your soft breaths with the eddies
that roam in the heaven of her tresses,
Whisper her low the love-lessons
you learnt amid amorous bowers.

Smoothe out the silks that encumber
the curves of her bosom and shoulder,
Limn her in lissomy lines
as her loveliness leans on the breeze,
Mould from the breath of my sighings
the soft-flowing airs that enfold her,
Make of my starved kisses round her
a swarm of invisible bees.

Tell her you felt in your roamings
the pulse of a heart that was keeping
Time with her heart-throbs far over
the star-entranced seas of the South,
Found a great flower of desire
that slept not when roses were sleeping,
Blew in the languorous lands
on a mouth that was warm for her mouth.

Bear her the loves and the longings
that wake at the tropic day's dying,
When the passion-flower's torches die down
in the velvet, voluptuous dusk,
Tell her of stillnesses filled
with a yearning too violent for crying,
Dreams that are bitter at dawning
as fruits withered sour in the husk.

Take her this message, O North Wind,
and charm her with spells of your weaving,
Subtle and secret and sweet
as ensorcelling songs of the sea;
Ravish her up when your troops
'mid the flowers are afoot for the thieving,
And bring on your swift wings returning,
the Queen of the Blossoms to me.

WALTER OWEN.

## VINDICATION

(*A reply to Julia Boynton Green's poem, "After an Earthquake."*)

BRIGHTER than the cruel, unpitying fire,
Greater than the whirlwind's fearful power,
Where death and torment reign their little hour;—
Stronger than the rending, dread and dire,
Of mighty shocks that heap the earthquake's pyre—
Triumphant, where disease and pain devour,
Man's spirit raises its unyielding tower.
Of all the storm of evil, stout defier.
Though primal forces rage around its base,
It bears within, the spirits' quenchless light,
Reflects in glory its Creator's face,
And shines, a beacon, through doubt's wave-tossed night.
Subtle, unseen, through a gloom of cosmic strife,
Of all that lives, alone possessed of life!

MARY ALETHEA WOODWARD.

* * *

Characterizing free verse as "semi-intoxicated prose" a great part of which is simply the product of laziness combined with a spirit of revolt, Dr. Henry Van Dyke, the eminent poet and U.S.A. Ambassador, now professor emeritus of Princeton University, scored off modern writers and readers in an interview with the *New York Times* on his seventy-fifth birthday. The joys of reading masterpieces and hearing beautiful symphonic concerts cannot be excelled, he stated.

A main cause of the lack of appreciation of good poetry to-day, he said, is the fact that the people of this generation do not know how to read "and won't take the pains to learn. They roar, or squeak, or mumble, and fancy they are reading. They are not—they are only mangling the English language."

Turning to free verse, Dr. Van Dylke said: "I do not care much for what is called free verse, except when it is written by a person who has a natural sense of new rhythms, as Walt Whitman had at his best. A great part of it is simply the product of laziness combined with the spirit of revolt. It is not really free, and it is not usually verse, but semi-intoxicated prose. Luckily it is going out of fashion."

## THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

We welcome several new-comers to our ever-increasing Fellowship, and are particularly gratified by the participation of more over-seas contributors in the competition for premium honours. The larger occasional contests strengthen rather than weaken this regular feature, in which no limitations of subject or form are prescribed. Hence fascinating versatility is found in the MSS. under consideration. Mystic fervour, most strongly expressed by Elizabeth Alden and Marguerite Pollard, the modernity of J. Passy, the vivid portraiture of P. O'Donnell, Mrs. Baker, and many others; the narrative skill of Mrs. MacCuaig, the grace and delicacy of Aileen Ward and T. B. Crawford and K. Munday, the dignity and rhythmical mastery of J. W. Nance's odes and T. E. Casson's chants royal are notable examples of the variety of work before us—equally varied too in the verse forms adopted. From among them we select Miss Pollard's ecstatic "Lad of Vision" and "The Rosy Cross," and the contrasted vivid piece of colour by Mr. Walter Owen, Buenos Aires, for the premium, placing on the honours' list: E. Alden, Thame; N. Allport, Polesworth; Audrey Bell, Hampstead; T. E. Casson, Ulverston; Beatrice Eve, Weybridge;[1] D. Ewens, Kensington; Blanche T. Hartman, Pittsburgh; S. Hawker, Weymouth; H. Creighton Hill, Widnes; F. Kemp, Catford; A. H. Mendes, Trinidad; G. E. Merrick, Warminster; K. Munday, Salisbury; M. Forbes Myers, Bournemouth; J. W. Nance, Bromborough; M. Ormiston, Kensington; Nancy Pollok, Glasgow; Morwyth Rees, Pembroke Dock; Clyde Robertson, Reading, Pa.; Michael Roberts, Long Benton; Virginia Stait, Gordonsville, Va.; Barbara Smyth, Perth; E. W. Walker, Bournemouth; Aileen Ward, Toronto; John Willwyn, Gobowen; A. D. L. Wilson, Bedford.

We have also an extended commended list this month: J. W. Anderson, Skegness; M. I. Anderson, Bridlington; R. W. Angus, Chippenham; Bertha Annakin, Wetherby; Vera I. Arlett, Worthing; Mrs. Benjamin F. Baker, Richmond, Va.; Edyth S. Beves, Hove; M. K. M. Brown, Southampton; Adolphe de Castro, New York; J. B. Crawford, Paisley; E. Cullabine, Worksop; Loftus Dale, Havant; Helena Derezinska, Warsaw; G. W. Eustace, Arundel; D. Ewens, London, W.2; E. Dorothy Ginger, Cairo; Dulcie Eden Greville, Silcoates; O. Hickman, London, N.W.10; E. Joyce Harrison, Lincoln; E. Holdsworth, Halifax; G. Harris, London, S.E.6; Walter K. Lewis, Ramsgate; F. V. Luxmoore, Burnham-on-Sea; K. Munday, Salisbury; K. L. MacCraig, Birmingham; H. Atherton Nichols, Jr., New York; J. H. R. Orde, Tobago; Petronella O'Donnell, Burnham-on-Sea; J. Passy, Ambleside; Mabel Posegate, Ohio; Iris Potter, Leigh-on-Sea; M. E. Pyne, Chelmsford; John Purdie, Paisley; E. Reynolds, London, N.W.8; Esther Samms, Luton; Barbara Smythe, Perth; Helen B. G. Sutherland, Fife;

Aileen Ward, Toronto; C. W. White, Mundesley; Elizabeth Wild, Berkeley, Calif; Mary Alethea Woodward, Oregon.

* * *

A new-comer to our Fellowship, the Rev. F. Arden Minty, D.D., LL.D., is a direct descendant through his mother of Mary Arden, the mother of Shakespeare. Dr. Minty, by the way, is one of the many who recognises the value and significance of the "extra," *Poetry of Today*, "which gives one a spiritual introduction to so many minds and knits us together in an expressive, harmonious fellowship." We welcome also English-speaking Koreans and Chinese, who are struggling to express themselves in an alien medium, to our editorial board, and it is gratifying to report that the latest new addition to our subscribers among universities and schools in the Far East is the Kwang Hua University, Shanghai.

* * *

We are always glad to have from contributors notes on debatable points and matters of interest to this bi-monthly conference. Mr. Eustace writes:

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made *on*, . . ."

The "on" is now so commonly replaced by "of" that if would appear to be worth while for the "Poetry" to call attention to this error. Even Edwin Markham in his recently published Anthology falls into this pit. The corruption is unfair to Shakespeare. It commits him to a view of life which he never held. Dreams, although based on actualities, are themselves made up of uncontrollable, subconscious emanations of thought.

If we are such stuff as dreams are made *of*, we should be insane: victims of "the waking dream." "On," as used by Shakespeare in the above, embraces the doctrine of freewill; "of" that of Fatalism, to which he never subscribed.

* * *

The Editor has approved a course of individual postal instruction in the principles of versification, with direct personal application in each case, based on the beginner's own work and needs, as an extension of the "Poetry Review Personal Service." It is desirable that all writers should have a working knowledge of the technique of their art. A course of instruction and direction for readers who wish to deepen their appreciation of poetry is in preparation. Its primary object will be the elucidation of poetry as a criticism of life. Writers and readers who are interested in these matters are invited to communicate with the Editor.

* * *

The Stanford University Press has published Prof. Henry Rushton Fairclough's address as President of the American Philological Association given at Harvard University, dealing with "The Classics and Our Twentieth-century Poets." It is a very readable lecture, of great

interest to our Fellowship, for Mr. Fairclough shows conclusively that classical culture permeates the most distinctive modern American poetry. Edward Arlington Robinson, " American to the core," and hailed by a Sorbonne professor as " the greatest poet in the English language to-day," owes much to Attic tragedy ; H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, now Mrs. Richard Aldington), " whom many critics regard as representing the high-water mark of creative lyric verse in our day," together with Amy Lowell, leaders of the modernists, have been deeply affected by Greek culture—the former " has completely transported herself into the Hellenic past "—and the latest " extraordinary poet " to come into prominence. Robinson Jeffers, just as much as W. Ellery Leonard, the scholarly translator of Leuretius, clasps hands with the great classics across time. The great majority of the outstanding poets in America to-day have had an academic training, and Mr. Fairclough shows the influence in most marked throughout their work—that with them, as with many of the lesser known contributors to the leading verse magazines, " the Greek dream is the noblest ever," as Eugene O'Neill confesses. Classical allusions, classical subjects, and other evidences of classical influence abound, in spite of the now despairing cry of the poetasters, " Be original, forget God and the Greek and Latin stories and mythology—be modern." We in this causerie are aware of similar influences : to-day we have Mr. Chappelow, Mr. Nance, Miss Carroll, Dr. Skeat, Miss Green, and many other contributors—English and American—drawing inspiration and illustration from the classics. They are building on a sound foundation, unaffected by the recent tendency to revert to the primitive and form —less mud and plaster and rough rubble.

* * *

1. The usual premium of £2 for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued, and six books will be awarded in recognition of " highly commended."

2. Not more than *four* poems may be submitted at the same time.

3. All MSS. submitted for these premium awards should be addressed to " The Premium Editor," the Poets' Fellowship, THE POETRY REVIEW Office, before February 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, or international coupon, and, if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (If a more detailed postal criticism is desired, 5s. should be sent.)

4. Every entry must be certified as original and as not having appeared in print, and *the name and address* of the competitor must be attached to the MS.

5. Entries must be either typewritten or written in ink on one side of the paper only, and contributors must be members of the Poetry Society or registered postal subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW.

6. The decision of the Editor must be accepted as final (pars. 4, 5, 6 apply to all THE POETRY REVIEW premium offers).

### The Lewis "Disappointment" Premium.

The number of poems submitted and the variety of treatment tend to show that disappointment is not only a universal feeling but is also the inspirer of eloquent expression. Almost all the entries adhered strictly to some phase or definition of disappointment and did not extend it to instances of failure and expressions of sorrow and grief. The burden of many was that of the Preacher who found that all is vanity—the disappointment of hopes, pleasure, frivolity, friendship, combined with the sting and bitterness of this common experience, which, in itself appears, according to Miss Pollard, to be of the evil one, though many who wrestle with it, like Jacob with his angel, win a blessing even if they halt upon their thighs ever afterwards. It has been a fruitful competition which deserves to be analysed and discussed further if space allowed.

For various reasons we are constrained to place *hors concours* the comprehensive examination of the influences of the "resistless daughter of adversity" submitted by Eric B. W. Chappelow (Blackheath); the skilful contrasts, light and serious, of the series of clever poems sent in by "Laurentian" (Toronto); and the vivid blank verse pictures of *The Mirror of Elaine* by Dr. Bertha M. Skeat, and allot half the premium in equal parts to K. M. Carroll (Glasgow) for her rhetorical address of *A Soldier of Fortune to a Reigning Duchess Who is To Requite His Love with Death*, and Dorothea Graham Botha (Mowbray, Cape Province), who reverently discloses *The Disappointment of God*. The literary charm of G. W. Eustace's commerce with Chaucer, Margaret Hume's subjective *Lament*, Barbara E. Smythe's recall of her *Lonely Hunter* who "Sings His Disillusionment," the classical disdain of Œdipus concentrated into a sonnet by Ruth Evelyn Henderson (Washington, D.C.), and the alusiveness of *Change* by R. W. Angus (Chippenham) with which we must associate a poignant phase of disappointment penned by fourteen-years-old Elizabeth Binnington (Louth), deserve the tangible recognition of having the balance of the premium split between them. We think we have done justice to the donor's intentions.

We must place high on the honours' list the curious, unrhymed, rhythmical stanzas by "A" (Warminster) with its final refrain,

> "The blind, dumb world goes hasting, stumbling on,
> Only to find no pockets lurk in shrouds,"

and the cadenced, philosophical conclusions of *The Hermit* by J. W. Nance (Bromborough), and highly commend the efforts to express the sense and significance of disappointment in exalted, morbid, pessimistic, moral, defiant, or pitiful strains of E. F. Alden, Haddenham; B. Annakin, Wetherby; Vera I. Arlett, Worthing; Freda Baxter, Blackheath; Florence Bone, Ripon; K. Bowden, Pontypridd; M. K. Mackillop Brown, Southampton; Helena Derezinska, Warsaw; E. A. Evans, Charlottesville, Va.; J. Boynton Greene, San Bernardino; E. M. Greeves-Carpenter, Medina, Pa.; E. Hall Haines, London,

W.12; Blanche Lee, Oneida, N.Y.; F. V. Luxmoore, Burnham-on-Sea; Editha Melbourne, Belvedere; Mary B. Moynahan, Indianopolis; M. R. Musgrove, Harleston; I. K. Nagel, Southsea; A. K. Norman, Weymouth; J. O. Ogilvy, Epworth; Mabel Posegate, Cincinnati; John Purdie, Paisley; Esther Samms, Luton; N. R. Sanders, West View, Pa.; Sydney Snell, London, S.W.2; Elizabeth Toldridge, Washington; C. A. Turner, Barnes, S.W.13; A. R. Heron Ward, Chesham Bois; Elizabeth Wild, Berkeley, Cal.; John Willwyn, Gobowen; M. A. Woodward, Portland, Or.

One of the most individual poems (*Wilderness*) bore no name or address. Several other MSS. had no address on them. When will competitors and other contributors remember always to give full name and address on their MSS? Identification must not be dependent on a covering letter which is discarded while the MS. is read and re-read, transferred from pile to pile, in the process of comparison and valuation.

### Another Lewis Premium Offer.

Mr. W. K. Lewis, who is disappointed that his excellent example in offering special premiums for poetic expression on specific subjects has not been followed by other readers of The Poetry Review on this side of the Atlantic, again offers three guineas to our verse-writing members. This time the subject is "War"—in any aspect. We are now somewhat removed from the late, devastating demonstration of war and better able to view it in a detached manner. In consequence the subject has come up anew for widespread discussion and may fittingly be dealt with in poetry, which has been defined as "emotion remembered in tranquillity." It may be treated didactically or incidentally, by way of precept or illustration, or (as it is complained that great deeds and individual heroism in the late war have not been celebrated in verse) by ballad story and incidental description. The subject offers wide scope. MSS. must reach "The Lewis Premium Editor, The Poetry Review, 16 Featherstone Buildings, London, W.C.1" not later than March 20th.

### Two New $100 Premium Offers

Mrs. Charles D. Dickey, V.P., has provided 100 dollars as a Premium for the best poem or poems dealing with Flight in any aspect—in celebration of achievement or in anticipation of development or in praise of the subject itself—however contributors may feel constrained to deal with this modern subject which, as the Duke of Norfolk pointed out at the Poets' Descendents' Dinner many years ago, was then a fit subject for poetic treatment and has become more so in the meantime.

The closing date will be announced in the next issue of The Poetry Review, together with particulars of another 100 dollar premium offered by the eminent American writer of philosophy and science, Mr. Charles Alva Lane.

We regret that at the time of going to press the results of the Civilization poems' contest have not come to hand. They will appear, we hope, with the Leader poems' awards in our next issue.

GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL COMPETITIONS FOR CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS.

THE POETRY REVIEW offers, in memory of Mr. W. F. Rawnsley, two of the famous Lucchesi busts of Tennyson for awards to the schools submitting (*a*) the best collection of poems by pupils, and (*b*) the best selection of poems by local poets, known and unknown, or descriptive of the town or county in which the school is located.

In addition, book prizes at the adjudicator's discretion, including copies of Harrap's "Poetry and Life Series," will be given in three classes for the best individual poems received from young people under 13 and from 13 to 17. Not more than two poems may be submitted by or on behalf of any one competitor, and each MS. must bear the name and address of the writer, and an endorsement of authenticity by a parent or teacher, who must be a member of the Poetry Society. School teachers, however, may send in batches of poems by their pupils, and in the event of any large number being received from any particular school or teacher a special additional prize or prizes may be awarded, thus constituting a competition within the major gen ral contest. All MSS. should be addressed to the Young People's Editor THE POETRY REVIEW, 16 Featherstone Buildings, London, W.C.1, on or before March 31st. Personal criticism of MSS. can only be given on payment of a fee of 5s. Several poems may be sent by teachers and others for a private opinion for this fee.

Similarly, individual book prizes will be given for the best individual lists of not more than ten poems within the above category (*b*). These individual selections may include both types of poems—poems by local writers and about the locality. We hope to encourage literary research among young people and the cultivation of taste and judgment in poetry and interest in its local manifestation and application. Competitors may define their area—urban or county—and this limitation should be stated at the head of the lists sent in. Address and closing date as above. It is intended to repeat these competitions each term.

* * *

Mrs. Grace Rhys, the compiler of *A Celtic Anthology*, will be responsible (with Mr. Ernest Rhys, the poet and erudite editor of Everyman's Library) for a special Celtic Poetry Meeting at an early date, to be followed by a Children's Poetry Meeting, to which Mr. Kenneth Grahame, Miss Rose Fyleman, Miss Elizabeth Fleming, Miss Farjeon, Mr. A. Bain, Mr. W. Thorley, Mr. Compton, Mr. Philip Wayne, and other authorities on this fascinating subject will contribute.

# POETRY AND THE PLAIN MAN

## Lady M. Sackville and the Shortlands Centre

THE Shortlands Centre of the Poetry Society was honoured by a second visit from the Lady Margaret Sackville on November 29th, when members and visitors gathered in St. Mary's Parish-room to hear a very original and interesting paper on "Poetry and the Plain Man," and a recital of her own poems.

The Lady Margaret Sackville was supported by the president of the Centre, Mrs. Leishman, and Mrs. Dykes, who, on Mrs. Leishman's behalf, spoke of the Shortlands Centre, which was founded in 1911 by Miss Punch, and had continued with varying membership its weekly and fortnightly meetings during three sessions in each year without interruption. Some of the oldest members were present that afternoon, among them being Lady Grant Burls, at whose house the first meeting of the local Centre was held. In addition to private meetings, several public meetings had also taken place.

The Lady Margaret Sackville, in her address, asked the question, What was poetry, and what did the plain man mean when he spoke of it? Poetry had to be read conscientiously, or it was a bore. Nothing could be more tiresome than poetry if it was placed in an unnatural light. It was difficult to approach, but much depended on the way it was approached. Poetry, to many people, had become something which they loathed through the wrong way of approach adopted at school, where certain set pieces were instilled into their minds whether they liked them or not.

It would surprise some people to know that they had spoken poetry all their lives when they had thought themselves to be speaking prose. The reverse could also happen, and a poet who thought he was writing poetry, could find himself a prose writer only.

The plain man often understood poetry and did not undervalue where artistic value was concerned. The poet took life, ordinary life; and, like religion, poetry represented ordinary life magnified and restated.

Regarding the appreciation of poetry, it varied among those qualified to judge, and educated taste was often a sorry guide. Ideals and ideas of a few years ago had changed and grown old-fashioned, and were now despised. But Chaucer and other great poets and writers had not grown old-fashioned. The word "modern" was often used and mis-used, and dwelt too much upon. It was a word with a hollow sound—desolate, evanescent. The most modern poets of all were those who remained true to the standards which were unvarying and set up by the great poets of the past. There were extremists in the modern world, but those extremists performed the function of keeping normal people up to the mark. The right estimate of poetry in their own time was a very difficult thing. Established reputations might survive; it was idle to speculate. Poetry remained; it grew out of life. Appreciation of poetry was only by the whole being, not only of the intellect. Appreciation was, however, bound up with temperament. The true critic was he who appreciated motive.

Kensington Centre meetings have been arranged as follows :—

January 26th. "Ships and Sailors in History," Miss C. Fox-Smith, at Lyceum Club, 138 Piccadilly, W.1.

February 9th. "A Tennyson Lecture-Recital," by Mr. Wallis Mansford, assisted by Miss Peggie Hodge, G.M.P.S., 9 Melbury Road, W.14.

„ 23rd. Readings from Shakespeare by members of the Bess, 73 Onslow Square, S.W.7.

Kensington Centre members are requested to forward their subscriptions when due to the General Secretary at 16 Featherstone Buildings. This will relieve the Centre Secretary of considerable clerical labour.

* * *

The Sutton Centre programme is as follows :—

January 4th. Social evening at Benfleet Hall.

February 1st. Mr. A. W. Wills, "Keats," with musical illustrations.

March 7th. Mr. W. P. Robins, "Rembrandt," with lantern illustrations.

April 18th. Members' open meeting.

Meetings are held at 8 p.m., at Benfleet Hall, Sutton, by the kind permission of the President, Miss Gifford.

* * *

Following on the January 6th meeting, devoted to Shakespeare's Sonnets and Songs, with music, at the Old Church House, the Barnet Centre will enjoy the following programme :—

January 20th. Kipling readings arranged by Miss Mather, at 14 Wood Street.

February 3rd. Annual Meeting, and reading of *The Rape of the Lock*, arranged by Mr. White, at 30 Ravenscroft Park.

„ 17th. "The Inheritance of the Poets"—a lecture by Mr. A. C. Dent, at 33 Wood Street.

* * *

It is gratifying to be able to report that the income of The Poetry Society for 1927 was higher than that of any previous year, and that the receipts from the three chief sources of revenue (membership subscriptions, verse-speaking examination fees, and Poetry Review sales and advertisements) averaged an increase of above 33⅓ per cent. over those of 1927.

* * *

Readers interested in the acquisition and preservation as a national asset of Tennyson's old home, Aldworth, which its present owner, H.H. the Maharajah of Baroda, intends to sell in the spring, are requested to communicate with the General Secretary of The Poetry Society. The matter has become urgent if effective action is to be taken.